

*The Boys of
Springtown
By Nephtli Anderson*

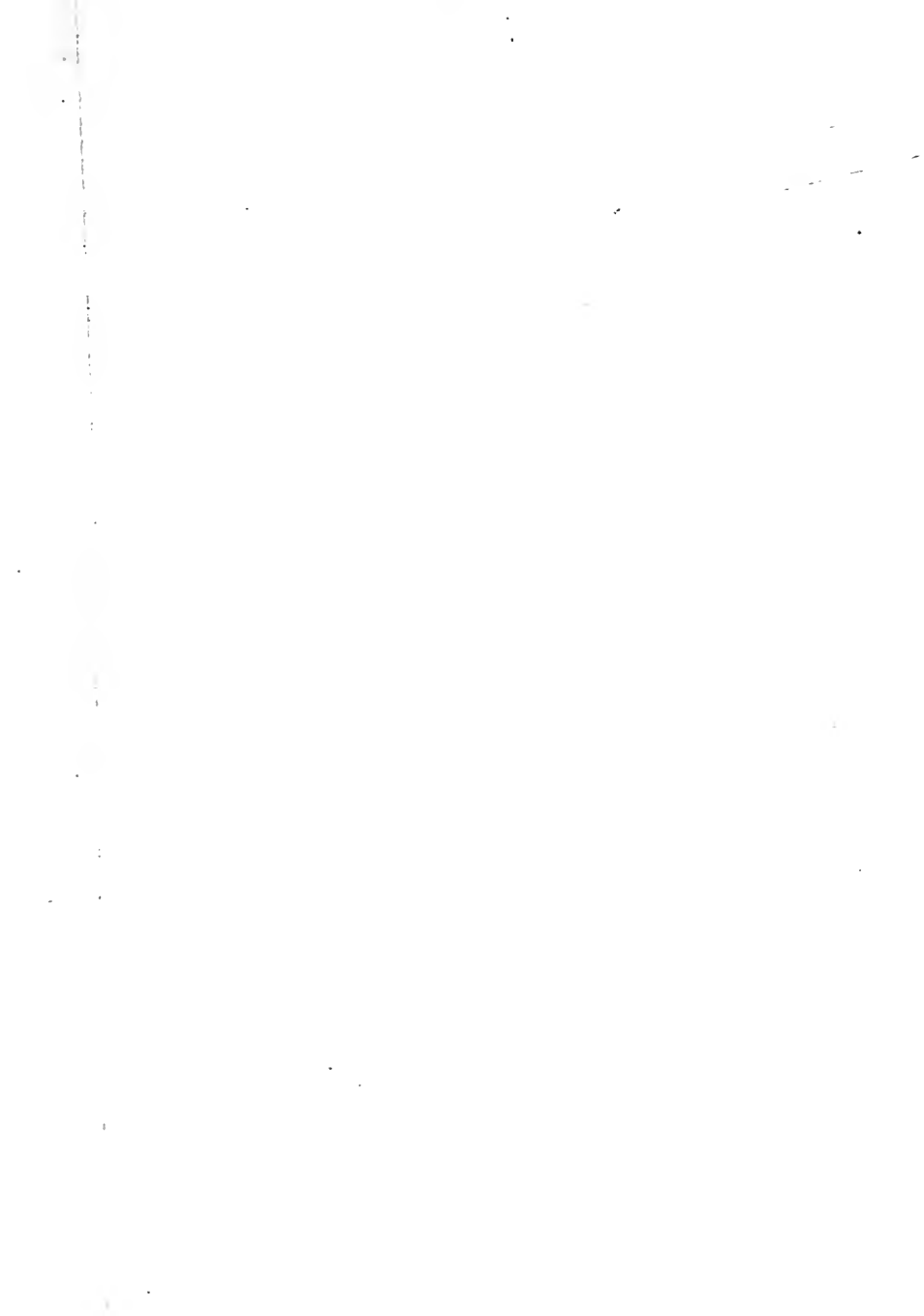


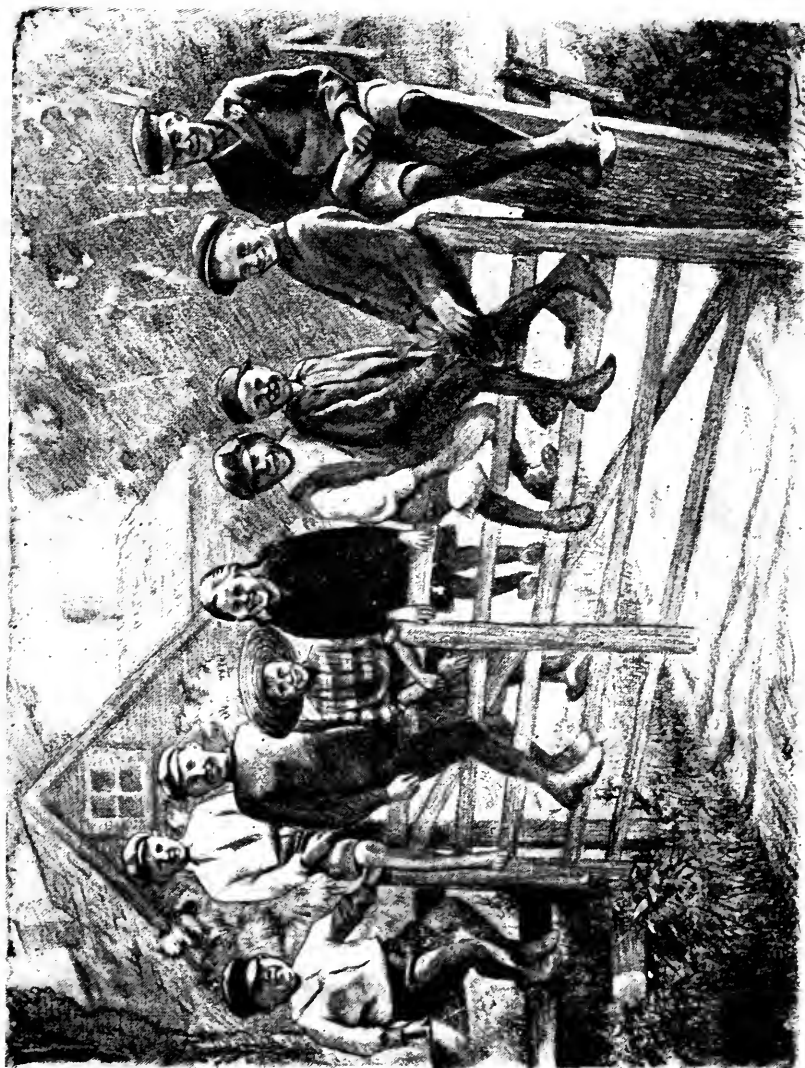
LIBRARY
Brigham Young University



BX
E688.3
.An24b

73123





THE BOYS OF SPRINGTOWN.

The Boys of Springtown

With Special Reference to William Wallace
Jones and Ned Fisher.

By NEPHI ANDERSON,

*Author of "Added Upon," "John St. John,"
"Romance of a Missionary," Etc.*

DRAWINGS BY C. E. TILLOTSON.

Press of Zion's Printing and Publishing Company,
Independence, Jackson County, Missouri.

1920.

*“The hills are dearest which our childhood feet
Have climbed the earliest; and the streams most sweet
Are ever those at which our young lips drank—
Stooped to their waters o’er the grassy bank.”*

—Whittier

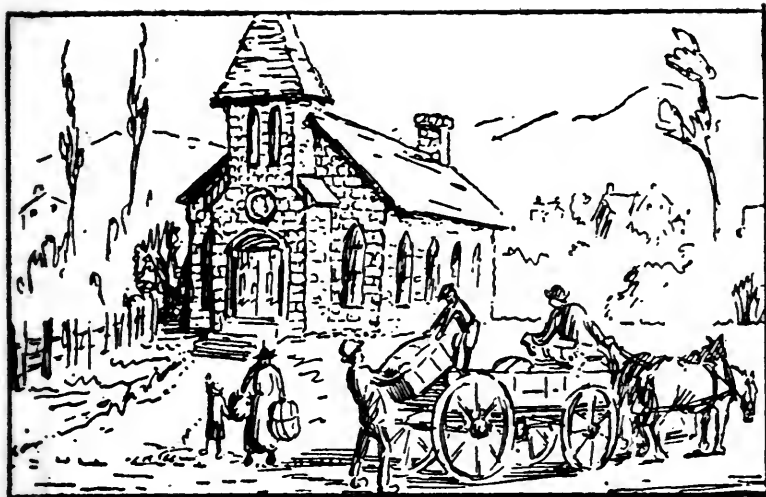
TO MY BOYS,
DEAN, GRANT, HARALD, CHARLES.

THE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

CONTENTS

	Page
Frontispiece.	
CHAPTER ONE, In which William Wallace Jones Arrives in the Land of Opportunity and Meets Ned Fisher....	7
CHAPTER TWO, In which some more of the Boys of Springtown are Introduced and We Get Better Acquainted with Aunt Martha	20
CHAPTER THREE, In which the Springtown Gun-club has an Outing, to which is Added an Adventure with the Indians.....	32
CHAPTER FOUR, Wherein the Boys Embark on a Voyage of Discovery, and Take Possession of their Findings.....	45
CHAPTER FIVE, In which the Boys of Springtown Conduct a Story-telling Contest.....	58
CHAPTER SIX, Which Tells How the Boys Played some Pranks, and Paid for Them.....	70
CHAPTER SEVEN, Wherein the Story-telling Contest is Continued....	82
CHAPTER EIGHT, In which the Circus Comes within reach of Springtown.....	92
CHAPTER NINE, Which tells of the Circus Coming to Springtown.....	103
CHAPTER TEN, In which the Boys Become Interested in Theatricals, and Take Part in an Outing to the Hills.....	113
CHAPTER ELEVEN, Wherein Ned and Will Spend an Evening with "Old Man Hansen" with Mutual Profit.....	124
CHAPTER TWELVE, In which the Bishop Talks to the Boys, and William Wallace is Called upon to Make a Sacrifice.....	137
CHAPTER THIRTEEN, In which Will Jones' Mother Comes to Zion, and We Say Good-bye to the Boys of Springtown.....	151





The Boys of Springtown.

CHAPTER ONE

In Which William Wallace Jones Arrives in the Land of Opportunity and Meets Ned Fisher.

The boys of Springtown, for the most part, had come to that village directly from heaven; William Wallace Jones, however, came by way of Liverpool, England, across the Atlantic ocean in the steerage of the *S. S. Nevada*, then by rail from New York to Wanda, and the remaining few miles by wagon. He

had enjoyed the ocean voyage, not having been seasick, but the long rail-road journey was wearisome, and the wagon which brought him from Wanda to Springtown rattled uncomfortably over the rocky road. William Wallace Jones, therefore, arrived at his destination in rather a jaded, untidy condition, which, of course, he would not have done had he come directly from heaven.

William Wallace had left his father and mother in Liverpool. His mother was a saintly woman; his father—well, the less said about him and his drink, the better. An uncle, being about to emigrate to America, offered to take the boy along. The mother, and the father also in his sober moments, realizing that this would be best for their son, gave their consent. The boy himself, dimly sensing that his father's hard life among the Liverpool docks was before him also was glad of the opening to escape. Was not here a chance to go to the land of Zion or America, which is also the Land of Opportunity!

The reason why Uncle Josiah had chosen to come to Springtown was because an acquaintance there had written him an invitation to come. Before Josiah Jones had moved to Liverpool, he had worked in the

coal mines of Wales. Wishing to escape this kind of labor, he had joined his brother at the Liverpool docks; but life was hard there also. He had written to his friend in western America that he wanted to get out into the open, and live the remainder of his life in God's sunshine. The friend had replied that in and about Springtown there were vast stores of fresh, clean, sun-bathed mountain air to be had for the breathing; and, as far as he knew, there were no ships' docks or coal mines within a hundred miles. All this appealed strongly to Josiah Jones and to his wife Martha Jones, and—I suppose—to their only child, little six-year old Gwennie. William Wallace, not being consulted, expressed no opinion. How the head of the family was to make a living in this new land away from docks and mines had not worried Josiah Jones. The Lord who gave the pure air and the sunshine would, no doubt, provide the bread and butter.

It was dark when the wagon containing the big trunk, the bundles, and the emigrant family arrived at their destination. The driver of the wagon, who was the friend that had sent the invitation, had explained that he was sorry he could not take them to his home, because one of the children had the measles;

so the best that could be done for a few days was to lodge them in the school house, then not in use. The travelers gladly accepted any shelter to lay their tired heads. After a good warm supper which the good sisters of the Relief Society had provided, the bedding was spread on the floor, a prayer of thanksgiving for their safe arrival was said, and then they blew out the lamp and went to bed.

William Wallace did not fall to sleep immediately as did the others. What a long trip it had been, he thought! He had never before been away from his mother more than a day or two, and now—she was on the other side of the world from him. . . . How still it was, after having lived all his life among noise. Not a sound came to him, save now and then the clang of a bell from some nearby yard. . . . What was mother doing? It would be nearly morning now in England, and she would be busy with his father's breakfast. Oh, but she was a good mother—the best person on the earth! He could have treated her much better than he had; but regrets were vain now. She had clung to him, and had cried so, and had kissed him many times when he had left her. . . . The tears came to the boy's cheeks, and he cried softly a little while before he went to sleep.

The boy was the first to awaken in the morning. When he sat up and rubbed his eyes, the sun was shining through the uncurtained window. Without waking any of the others, he dressed, and went out doors. He was curious to know to what kind of place he had come.

What he saw differed from anything he had ever before seen, save as he had caught glimpses through the car windows. He had surely come to one of the "Valleys of the Mountains" of which he had heard the missionary elders and his Uncle speak. His imaginative picture of Springtown had been based on a small section of Liverpool, and so he was surprised to see no town at all, as he understood that term. One street or road extended through the valley, the lower hills on one side, the fields and meadows on the other. Here and there, sometimes quite a distance apart, were houses; some of logs, a number of rusty red brick, and a few of lumber which at some time in the distant past, had been painted white. Down in the lower part of the valley were patches of brush and trees, fringing a stream. The lower hills reached up to the distant mountains which were more rugged, some of them pine-clad, and others

bearing in deep crevices patches of half-melted snow. Above the sharp outlines of the mountains extended the bluest sky the boy had ever seen, into which the warm sun was now mounting. And the morning air! How clear and cool and invigorating it was!

William Wallace walked through the gateway and sauntered along a grass-bordered path which led to the lower fields. He came to some pole bars through which he slipped into a meadow. The grass was wet with dew. A flock of birds was chattering in the tree tops. He wondered whether or not he was trespassing by walking on the grass; but there were no paths pointed out, nor stiles to climb as there were in the fields near Liverpool, as he had seen on the rare occasions when he had visited them. The boy had come into a new world. He seemed to feel that he was freer here to come and to go as he pleased. He was a little dazed, as a bird might be, which had been released from the narrow confines of its cage.

The boy wandered somewhat aimlessly on until he came to the river. From the grassy bank he looked down into the clear water which here eddied into a pool. A little further along it broke and tumbled over the stones, sending back the pleasant music

of splashing water, which sang itself into the heart of the listening boy. Presently, he walked on down the stream, passed the rapids to where the river widened, then divided and flowed about an island amidstreams. The island was covered with grass and brush, and the boy could see that on the side nearest to him there was a tiny cove with a pebbled beach.

The island appealed strongly to William Wallace Jones. Some people might find a reason for this in the fact that his grandfather had spent most of his life cruising among the tropical islands of the South Seas, and had poured many an interesting tale of them into the young boy's listening ear. Be that as it may, the boy was very much interested in his new surroundings, and started out to see more of them.

In exploring a small forest of brush which skirted the stream, William Wallace had to break his way through some of the denser places, in doing which he made considerable noise. Suddenly, he came out on to a clear grassy plat near the water, and fairly burst upon a boy who was fishing. As William Wallace arrived rather abruptly, the fisher turned with a scowling admonition for him to make less noise.

“There, darn it!” exclaimed the boy with the fishing rod,” a big fish was just goin’ to bite, when you scared it away. It was a whopper. Why—?”

The question was not fully asked, as the boy turned and saw that the intruder was not one of his village companions. The two stood looking at each other. The boy who had been fishing eyed William Wallace from head to foot. He grinned, and then he scowled. This new-comer must be shown his place in that town right away. The fisher pulled his line from the water, deliberately wrapped it about the crooked willow rod, and stuck the hook, for safety, into the soft bark. Then he stepped up to William Wallace with a threatening attitude, and asked?

“Who are you, anyway?”

The other retreating slowly replied: “I just come, sir. I—I didn’t mean to disturb you.”

“Ye didn’t? Well, why didn’t ye come by the path, then, an’ not make such a racket through the brush? I’ve a good mind to punch yer head for scarin’ the fish.”

William Wallace continued to retreat before the other boy. He was not exactly frightened at the strange behavior of the boy, but he was somewhat

startled at this his first encounter with the boys of Springtown. William Wallace was not usually afraid of boys of his own age and size, as those living in the neighborhood of his Liverpool home could testify; but this native son of America was certainly an "odd un". He was about the English boy's age and size. His face was sunburned and freckled. One suspender held up his well-worn overalls. He had on no hat, neither shoes nor stockings.

William Wallace did not know that the bank on which he was backing toward the stream had been undermined by the swiftly-flowing river a foot or two under the apparently firm sod. Neither did the other boy know it, or he would not so jauntily have followed the retreating boy and tapped him lightly on the nose.

The new boy did not want to fight on the very first day of his arrival in a strange land; but that aggressive touch on his face angered him, and his right fist shot out swiftly and hit his opponent's nose somewhat harder than his own had been. This angered the assailant, who now pressed the other boy close to the bank. As William Wallace felt the bank giving away under his feet, he clunched the other boy firmly

by the arm. For a moment they swayed on the bank, then both of them fell with a splash into the river.

Luckily, the boys fell feet first into the stream, and as the water reached only up to their waists, they scrambled out without much difficulty. William Wallace, being more fully dressed than the other, was heavily laden with water. A wet skin soon dries, so the lightly-clad lad did not worry; but he grinned at William Wallace as he said:

“Say, that was some wettin’. What ye get so near the edge for? I was only kiddin’ ye, anyway. Say, what’s yer name?”

“William Wallace Jones.”

“Gee! that’s too long for Springtown. I’ll call ye Will on week days, an’ William Wallace on Sundays. You just come over, didn’t ye?”

“Over where, sir?”

“Why, from the Old Country. Ain’t you the kid what just come from England?”

“Oh, yes, sir—just last night.”

“Are ye a fighter?”

“No, sir.”

“But ye *can* fight, can’t ye?”

“Well, sir, when I *have* to.”

“Say, I want ye to be on my side. My name is Ned, Ned Fisher.”

The other boy, not knowing just what this invitation meant, did not reply. He was very wet and somewhat miserable. He must also be getting back to the folks, for he would be missed.

“I think I’ll be going now,” said Will.

“Say, I’ll go with ye. I’d better explain to your ma that it wasn’t your fault that ye got wet.”

They found the path which led away from the river to the field and up the road. The fisher’s luck had not been good that morning, his catch consisting of only three small trout, now strung through their gills by a willow. Could he give them to the new boy to be used as a peace offering to his mother? for he felt sure that the boy would be punished for getting his clothes wet.

“Say, want some fish?”

“No, thank you,” said William Wallace.

“Well, ye can have them. These are hardly worth bringing home to *our* big family, besides, I can catch some more. Better take ’em.” He held them out to the boy.

William Wallace took them, with thanks. The

folks were stirring at the school house. Uncle Josiah had called on some of the neighbors for suggestions as to the likely whereabouts of his nephew. Aunt Martha stood on the steps, looking anxiously about.

The two boys slipped through the gate, but Ned lingered near the fence, ready for retreat to safety, should there be any need for flight. Aunt Martha gazed in surprise at the boy before her, looking as if he had waded waste deep in the river to catch the fish dangling from the willow branch in his hand.

“William Wallace Jones, where have you been?” demanded the woman.

“Just for a walk, down to the river, an’—”

“Well, how did you get so wet? Did you fall in the river?”

Evidently, there was no saving grace for him in the offering of fish. He looked toward his companion for the promised help.

“I pushed him in,” volunteered Ned from a safe distance. “It wasn’t his fault.”

Just then Uncle Josiah and one of the neighbors came up. They heard Ned’s confession, and saw him immediately after take to his barelegs up the road. The neighbor laughed good-naturedly at the wet boy,

slapped him on the back, and asked him how he liked his introduction to Springtown.

William Wallace might have felt very much aggrieved over his treatment at the hands of Ned Fisher that morning, but somehow, he did not. He rather liked the new acquaintance; so when the neighbor repeated his question, Will replied:

“Champion!”

As the neighbor had never been in England he did not know that this exclamation meant in plain western American, “Bully”, or in the more proper English, “Very well, thank you.”



CHAPTER TWO

In Which some more of the Boys of Springtown Are Introduced and We Get Better Acquainted with Aunt Martha.

About a month after the arrival of the English boy, a group of boys was sitting on the hitching pole in front of the Springtown store. This was a favorite gathering place, it being somewhat in the center of the village and also an advantageous point of observation for whatever might be going on. That afternoon no teams were tied to the pole and no men were lounging by, so the boys had their perch all to them-

selves; and there were seven of them, sitting all in a row like so many chattering magpies on a fence.

William Wallace Jones, now usually called Will, was the last to arrive. Ned Fisher made room for him. Ned had taken him under his patronizing care, which had given him a prestige with the boys which otherwise he would not have acquired so readily.

And as they are all balancing so comfortably on that hitching pole, it might be a good time to introduce these boys, if only by name.

Usually, there is some accounting for names, but sometimes there isn't.

Will Jones, boy number one, having already occupied most of Chapter One, needs but little more said of him; only that he was fast acquiring the ways of the boys about him, being nearly as much a Springtown boy as those who had lived there all their lives. His overalls and his bare legs evidenced the fact that he was being acclimated.

Ned Fisher sat next to Will. Ned was one of the recognized leaders in the Springtown boy-world. He was given to "bossing", but, as a rule, he was quite fair both in fight or frolic. How Charles Thomas Fisher, the boy's name, came to be shortened to Ned,

has never yet come to light. He was always known among the boys as Ned.

Next to Ned sat James Brown. Fate and the boys permitted him to be called Jim.

Slim Larsen perched next to Jim. His name in the roll book at school was plain Nels, short enough, surely, to suit the most exacting for brevity. He might have been permitted to carry his good Danish name had it not been for the fact that he was a short, plump chap, and someone at a psychological moment had called him Slim. Nels' mother had strenuously objected to this new name, not realizing that the harder one tries to pull away a nick-name, the faster it sticks.

The next boy was Richard Johnson. He had a narrow escape from being permanently called "Slips". During the early stages of his learning to play pool, he had acquired the habit of saying "slips" whenever he made a poor shot. The boys had resented this effort to cover up bad marksmanship by sometimes calling him Slips. However, just now, the rightful Dick was on the ascendency.

The boy next to Dick had a grandfather named Zephaniah, who, according to all reports, was a very

good man. Wishing to honor this parent and perchance to pass on his goodness to a grandson, the parents had named the boy Zephaniah. Although this name gave itself splendidly to calling when his mother summoned him from his play to chop wood, it was altogether too long and high-sounding for the boys, who liked Zeph better, as also did the boy himself.

John Johns sat next. He had been born of and christened by good Welsh parents who did not realize that the chief reason for a name is that it might help to distinguish one person from another. The boys, however, corrected this Welsh sameness by calling him Jack.

And so in all this naming, the boys of Springtown, as all boys do, came to the root of the matter ^{gave} gave names to persons and things about them in the natural, primitive way in which all names had their beginning—and who shall quarrel with them for this?

A wagon came rattling down the road. The boys paused in their chatter to see which one of them would be pushed off to give room for the tie-rope; but the driver stopped at the post office instead.

“Say, Will,” asked one of the boys, “how big is a ship?”

Will was an authority on ships. All the boys listened. Ships were interesting things.

“Well, the one I came on was a big one”, declared Will.

“How big?”

It was hard to explain. Will looked about for some object of comparison.

“As big as the store?”

“Bigger.”

The boys grunted disbelievingly.

“Was you sick?”

“Naw.”

“Was it a sailing ship or a steamer?”

“Steamer.”

“How long was you on the sea?”

“About two weeks.”

“Shucks, my grandfather was six weeks when he came over.”

“Say, what do they have to eat on board ships?”

“Do they have cows, an’ milk?”

“Was it stormy?”

“How high are the waves?”

Zeph only had not asked a question. His mind was not on the distant sea, but on something nearer home. It was his turn to ask:

“Say, boys, do you know the Indians are campin’ again across the river?”

“No! are they?”

“Yep. I was over there yesterday, an’ say—”

The boys slid down from their perch and gathered more closely about Zeph who also jumped down. They all went across the road to the ditch bank and sat down.

“I think it’s the same band that was here last summer,” continued Zeph; “an’ ye know, they was a wild lot.”

“Let’s go over tomorrow,” suggested Jim.

“Let’s,” repeated a number.

Some of the boys had their doubts whether or not they could go, Will being among them. When pressed for a reason why, he explained that he had to work.

“Work!” a number shouted in derision. “Will’s got to work!”

It should be explained that the Jones family had moved out of the school house and now occupied

a small dwelling not far from Ned Fisher's home. Here was a small lot to till. Potatoes had been planted, and they were now in a condition to be hoed, which was the work mentioned by Will. School was now out, and the boys were reveling in the lengthening summer days. Work? well, one might as well think of harnessing up a young colt.

"Say, do ye remember when the big Injun came right into town with his gun?" asked Slim.

"Yes, an' some of the kids was scared."

"I should say. Why, Georgie Small ran an' hid in the willows back of the house, an' his mother couldn't find him for a long time."

"Well, them Indians are supposed to be tame," said Zeph with an air of superior knowledge, "but ye can't depend on 'em. Why Jef Redden said he knew they stole his horses last year, an' ye know—"

"Zeph-a-ni-ah!" came rolling in distinct and emphatic syllables from across the Stephens' lot. Zeph instantly arose, and without saying anything further about his own bravery, which the boys knew was coming, he trotted down the dusty road toward home. Some of the boys laughed at Zeph's sudden departure. They knew the reason, and they were

enjoying to the full their mothers' leniency in letting them remain on the ditch-bank a little longer.

When the boys parted for the night Ned went along with Will. Ned's fondness for the English boy had grown ever since that first meeting by and in the river. He chummed with him, that being easier because of the nearness of their homes.

"Gee, I wish you could go with us tomorrow," said Ned.

"I'll ask Aunt Martha," replied Will as he went in the house.

Ned stopped at the gate as was his custom. He had never yet ventured in the house. A whistle from the sidewalk always brought Will out if it were possible for him to come. Now Ned waited patiently in silence for some time. Presently, Will reappeared.

"Can ye go?" asked Ned.

"I don't know yet. Come in."

"No; I don't want to." Ned held back.

"Oh, come on in; Aunt Martha says you're to."

Ned hesitated. He said he must be going home.

"Come on", urged Will. "Only Aunt Martha's home, an' she wont hurt you. She wants to see you, she says, an' maybe she'll let me go if you'll come in."

A sense of importance helped to overcome Ned's timidity. He followed his friend into the house. He looked about him in surprise. The last time he had been in that room was when it was empty and deserted and dirty. Now everything was neat and clean and cosy. Aunt Martha said, "How do you do?" and Will gave him a chair.

"William Wallace has been asking me if he might go with you boys tomorrow" began Aunt Martha; "but I wanted to know how he was going to hoe the potatoes and at the same time run wild with a lot of lazy boys. He couldn't tell me; perhaps you can."

Ned was dumb at this. He wished he was safely out of the house again. The woman stood looking at him as if she expected him to answer. Ned hung his head. She must be terribly angry, he thought; but when he timidly glanced up at her, he saw something like a smile on her face.

"Do you want William Wallace to go with you?" she asked.

Ned managed to say that he did.

"Well, there is a way he might be able to go."

"What's that?" cried Will.

"Why, by having the potatoes hoed first". She

was still looking at Ned as if her words were intended solely for him. "If *I* wanted *very much* to have someone go with *me*, I'd *do* something to help him. Four boys with four hoes can do as much in one hour as one boy with one hoe can do in four hours," she said as if repeating a problem in arithmetic. She then turned to Will as if she were through with the matter. "I nearly forgot. Here's a letter from your mother." She handed the boy a letter addressed to him, and therefore, unopened. Will took it to the window near which Ned was sitting, opened the letter, and silently read it.

"Well, what does she say?" asked Aunt Martha. "Read it to me."

Will held out the letter to her, but she did not take it.

"The light is too poor," she explained, "I cannot see."

The boy, somewhat reluctantly, read:

".....Now, my boy, I hope you are well, and that you are enjoying yourself in your new home. Do what Uncle Josiah and Aunt Martha want you to. Some day you will more fully appreciate how blessed you are in living in Zion. Your father has

been out of work for some time, and he is not well; but the Lord is good to us, and we are able to live. My constant prayer is that I might some day come to you, so that I might live with my *boy* a little while yet before he becomes a *man*. God bless you and keep you from evil. Remember the Lord in your prayers, and do not forget your father and mother.”

The reader stopped. Perhaps the light was too dim. The room was very quiet for a few moments. Ned could see that Will was going to cry, although he was trying hard not to, so he edged quietly to the door and slipped out. Then Will did cry.

Aunt Martha busied herself with supper. When it was ready she and Gwennie and Will sat down and ate their bread and milk. Uncle Josiah was not with them as his work took him away from home much of the time. The little girl prattled, the mother smiled contentedly, but Will was silent. He really was homesick. He longed for his mother; and the dim, dirty streets of Liverpool did not seem so bad after all. He finished his bowl, however, and did not refuse the cookie for dessert. When the meal was ended, Aunt Martha said:

“All right, my boy. As you want to get up early

in the morning to begin on the potatoes, you had better go to bed now. Take your letter with you and put it in your box. You will want to read it again some day. Now, good night", and she patted him gently on the head.

Will went up to the well-ventilated attic where was his bed. Before he fell asleep he saw through the glassless window the stars come out one by one into the clear, dark-blue sky; and then, ere he was aware, the frogs in the nearby meadow had sung him off to the land of dreamless sleep.



CHAPTER THREE

*In Which the Springtown Gun-club Has an Outing,
to Which is Added an Adventure with the Indians.*

Aunt Martha's little problem in arithmetic worked out correctly, for next morning three boys with their hoes came into the lot where Will was working, ranged themselves alongside, and plied their tools vigorously. Aunt Martha looked out at them once in a while to see that the work was done right. Just before noon, they had gone over the whole patch, and they came strutting up to the house with a self-satisfied air. Aunt Martha invited them to sit on

the porch and rest while she brought from the kitchen a pan of newly-baked, sweet-smelling cookies which she placed right under their noses. She looked at Ned Fisher with a gracious smile, and said:

“I thought you would do it. Now, you may have the first cake.”

Ned did not understand the full extent of the first part of this remark; but there was no question regarding what she meant by the latter part. The cookies were passed around once, twice, then Aunt Martha suggested that if they ate any more, they would spoil their appetite for dinner. She further suggested that the remaining cakes be placed in a bag and taken along on their afternoon trip.

Shortly after noon, Will Jones, Ned Fisher, Jim Brown, and Dick Johnson were on their way across the river to visit the Indian camp. Zeph (though yesterday's chief promoter of the trip) and a number of others had failed them for various reasons, chief of which was that they had not accepted Ned's invitation to meet that morning with their hoes in Will's potato patch. Huh! They didn't have to hoe potatoes, so they had kept away altogether.

Ever since Ned Fisher could remember, it had

been his ambition to own a gun. There were ducks to shoot in the swamps near the river and there were sage-hens in the hills. Some of the older hunters of Springtown told wonderful tales of deer and bear up in the mountains, but Ned's fondest dreams had not yet reached to such game.

Ned now had a shot-gun. A week ago he had traded for it with Blacksmith Goodall, giving in exchange ten fairly good, second-hand horse shoes and one discarded wagon tire. The horse shoes usually brought five cents each from the smith, while the tire was perhaps worth ten cents. To be sure, this gun was not in the best of condition. The barrel was rusty, the stock had a big crack in it, the hammer would not hold up, and there was no ramrod. These minor defects were soon overcome by the enthusiastic owner and his willing assistants. The barrel was scrubbed, inside and out, until it fairly shone. A wire was made to hold the stock together. A ramrod was easy to make from a piece of hickory which they found in the rubbish heap at the back of the blacksmith shop. A cow's horn was made into a powder flask, and Ned's marble bag held a small supply of shot.

The boys had the gun, with all that went with it,

that afternoon. There had been some discussion whether it would be wise to take along such a weapon when visiting Indians. The Redmen might think the fire-arm was meant for them, when in fact, it was only to shoot sage-hens, should any be seen. "Anyway," Ned had said, "it might be a good thing to have a gun along in case the Indians became 'sassy'." At hearing this remark, Jim didn't know whether he could go or not. His mother——

Ned looked at Jim and laughed so goodnaturally that the boy's courage came back—likewise that of William Wallace Jones. Had Aunt Martha known that they were to have a gun along, he was sure she would not have given him permission to go.

It was Ned's unquestionable right as owner to carry the gun, but he graciously permitted the other boys to carry the armament. They went on down the lane, across the meadow to the river.

"Le' me carry the gun," pleaded Dick.

"It's heavy", objected Ned.

"Shucks, I can carry it easy."

"You might hurt yourself."

"Taint loaded, is it?"

"No; but—here, you can carry the ramrod."

The river was rising to its annual spring flood, and the foot-bridge which spanned the stream trembled under their feet. Safely across, they climbed to a small table-land covered with choke-cherry bushes. They inspected the growing crop of berries, and planned for picking trips later.

"There ought to be some chickens here," remarked Dick.

"Yes," agreed Ned. "Let's look out for them."

They walked about stealthily. Will did not say much. This was a new experience for him, and he was content to follow the leadership of those who seemed to know all about the game.

"Say," whispered Jim, "There's something over there on that bush. See."

They all looked carefully.

"Shucks, that's a robin," said Ned.

"Well, why don't ye shoot it?"

"Shoot a robin. I guess not. What're you talking about?" This was said with such scorn that the subject was dropped.

Then, after a time, Will ventured: "Suppose you see a chicken. Is your gun loaded?"

No; it wasn't. They all laughed foolishly.

“We’re a lot of sillies,” suggested Ned; whereupon they proceeded to load the gun. First, the proper amount of powder was poured into the barrel and rammed down with newspaper wadding. Then the shot was run in and fastened with more of the paper, after which the cap was placed on the priming tube.

“Now, you boys stay back of me,” admonished the gun bearer.

They stalked about among the bushes for a time.

“Sh—! there’s a sage-hen.”

Ned tiptoed toward the bush indicated, and sure enough, there a sage-hen could be seen. The excitement became tense. Ned motioned for the boys to be still while he crept up within easy range. His finger touched the trigger, then he carefully lifted the hammer. Gee! The fact suddenly came to him that the hammer would not stay up! He could not aim, hold up the hammer, and pull the trigger at the same time. He must have help; he beckoned for one of the boys to come. Jack crept softly to him. Ned whispered his instructions to him; he was to hold up the hammer while Ned sighted the gun. “An’ don’t let go till I tell ye.”

When it came to aiming the gun, Ned found to

his dismay that he could not close his left eye while he sighted with his right. Everything became a blur when he tried to look along the barrel with both eyes. The sage-hen was unaware of danger. With Jack's help to hold up both the gun and the hammer, Ned managed to relieve one hand long enough to press his fingers against his left eye and thus make aiming clear. Jack was becoming nervous, and he was in danger of releasing the hammer before he was told. The gun wobbled considerably. The marksman had to open both eyes a number of times during all this maneuvering to see if the sage-hen was still on the perch. Yes, the bird was very patient with the boys.

At last Ned saw the object of their aim straight along the barrel. "Let 'er go," he said.

There was a loud report, a cloud of smoke, and two boys tumbled over backwards. A flock of sage-hens flew out of the bush.

Will and Jim came running up. "Did ye hit her?" they shouted. The four boys sped forward. The hen at which they had shot should have been lying dead under the branch on which it had been sitting, but it wasn't. The boys were very much disappointed, and Ned especially was inclined to blame

somebody else for the failure to bring down the game. They looked about, and there, quite on the other side of the bush at which they had been shooting, lay a sage-hen. Ned picked it up. It flopped faintly once or twice, and then became limp.

Indians were forgotten. With such success in hunting, what was a mere visit to an Indian camp! There might be more sage-hens to kill. They loaded the gun again and walked for a long time over the bench-land; but they saw no more game.

From the edge of the bench they looked down on a small creek bottom, a tributary of the river, where the Indian camp was located. They counted five tents or "wikiups", from two of which smoke was curling. Some horses were grazing nearby, and a number of Indian women and children could be seen moving about.

As the boys stood looking at the camp, the question of whether or not to take the gun with them, came up again.

"Where could we leave it?" asked Ned.

"We might hide it in some bushes."

"And have some one find it and claim it. Not much," objected the owner.

“The chicken will show what we brought the gun for,” suggested Jim; and as this appealed to them all, both the gun and the game were carried boldly into the Indian camp.

In those days it was the custom nearly every summer for a small party of Indians to camp for some time near the village. Seemingly, the main purpose of their annual visit was that the squaws might call at the doors and beg for “sooger” and “biscuit”. Certainly, they had no evil designs nor dispositions, notwithstanding some of the fears of the children and the talk of the boys.

There was always a degree of fascinating awe to the boys about a visit to an Indian camp. As the boys looked about, the Indians sometimes scowled at them and made gruff noises as though they were displeased, and considered the boys intruders. This afternoon as the boys inspected the tents at respectable distances they saw strips of red meat hanging about to dry, and the squaws were busy cleaning and scraping skins. A deer had no doubt been recently killed. A number of half-naked “papooses” were running about. At the near approach of the boys, they scurried to their mothers who looked up uncon-

cerned at their visitors, then said something, no doubt by way of admonition, to the children.

In one of the tents they saw a number of Indians sitting about a cleared space on the floor, playing some kind of game. A droning noise accompanied their movements.

“What are they doing?” asked Will.

“Gambling”, replied Ned. “an’ they’re ugly when they gamble.”

The Indians saw the boys watching them, and they seemed to cease their game. They said something to each other, and then one of them arose, and pulling his blanket about him, came to where the boys were standing, now somewhat frightened.

“What you want?” asked the Indian.

“Nothing—we-re just visitin’,” replied Ned.

“Huh! You Bishop’s boy?” questioned the Indian, pointing to Ned.

“No,” said Ned.

“What got?” He looked at the dead sage-hen which evidently did not interest him. Then he reached for the gun. “Me see”, he said.

Ned, with quaking heart, handed the Indian his gun. Was he merely going to keep it, or was he going

to use it on them? The Indian looked the weapon over, then with a contemptuous grunt, he handed it back.

"No good," he said as he turned and rejoined his companions, much to the relief of the boys, who now went on to where a squaw sat working beads on some moccasins. The boys of Springtown believed that all beads came from the Indians, who by some mysterious process of manufacture, supplied the world with these articles of ornamentation. It occurred to Dick that now would be a good time to get a supply of beads, so he approached the squaw, busy with her sewing, held out his hand, and said:

"Beads."

The woman merely looked up and grunted mildly.

"Give beads," he repeated.

The squaw caught sight of the bag of cookies which Dick carried. She became curious. She looked steadily at it, then pointed to it, then asked:

"What?"

"Oh, they're cookies", said Dick.

"Biscuit? Let see."

Dick, to the astonishment of Ned and Jim, gave

the squaw the bag. She looked in, then took out a cookie, and began to eat it.

“Heap wino,” she seemed to say as she finished one cake and took out another.

“Beads,” pleaded Dick. Surely she would give him some beads for the cookies.

“Say,” began Ned protestingly; he did not care for beads as much as he did for something good to eat. “Say!”

But just then there came a strange noise from up the ravine, and presently, there appeared three Indians on horses, riding at a gallop, their blankets flying in the breeze. The Indians whooped lustily as they came on toward the boys.

All the tales of wild Indians which the boys had ever read or heard came to them. For a moment they stood rooted to the spot, then they turned and dashed down toward the river and home. Though Ned held tightly his precious gun and Jim clung on to the sage-hen, they led the retreat, with Will and Dick close at their heels. It is hardly to be expected that twelve and fourteen year old boys can beat the tough Indian ponies, but the truth is that after five minutes running, the boys had outdistanced their

pursuers. They covered the distance to the bridge in record time; and it was not until they had reached the village side of the river that they stopped to rest and talk in bated breaths of their narrow escape.

However, the boys did not see the three Indians who had been in the chase now standing by their ponies and talking to the squaw who had been sewing beads on moccasins. They were smiling good-naturedly—if Indians can smile—as each of them munched a cookie.



CHAPTER FOUR

Wherein the Boys Embark on a Voyage of Discovery and Take Possession of Their Findings.

"I have learned," said Aunt Martha to her neighbor, Mrs. Fisher, "that boys hoe potatoes best when the rows are short, and they pick potatoes best when the buckets are small."

The two women were having a chat across the partition fence, about their family affairs. Ned was only one out of six of Mrs. Fisher's cares and problems.

"Boys," continued Aunt Martha, "are only a

little more human than men and women. There is nothing quite so discouraging as to begin a task to which there is no visible end. We all need endings and new beginnings in our work, and that, I have no doubt, is the reason why the Lord broke up the days into periods of seven, and appointed the seventh as a day of rest.

“I asked the Bishop once,” remarked Mrs. Fisher, “whether the law of the Sabbath was not made before the creation of woman, or rather before she was thought of.”

“Yes; what did he say to that?”

“He only laughed.”

“Well, I’ll say for my man, he’s very considerate. But what I wanted to speak to you about was our boys. William Wallace and your boy Ned are together nearly all the time. I don’t object to that, but I think they should have some work to do each day, before they, with the other boys, begin their play. ‘All play and no work, makes Jack a dull shirk’.”

“And I’ve noticed,” said Mrs. Fisher, “that my Ned works better in your lot and your boy Will works better in ours.”

“Yes, that’s another bit of boy nature which we cannot check, but must take advantage of, by letting the boys work together on their various tasks,” remarked Aunt Martha.

The neighbors came closer together. Mrs. Fisher agreed with Mrs. Jones, but she was at a loss how to get at the problem. Mrs. Jones made some suggestions which could be carried out, and which had in them the idea of giving the boys some definite tasks each day, not too long and with something of encouragement at the close.

And thus it came about that the boys’ excursions and doings at home and away were usually limited to the afternoons after the morning tasks had been done. At first, some of the boys grumbled a little at this new and fast ruling, but soon they discovered that the fun in the afternoons was much better because of the work in the mornings.

It was now the period of high water in the river, when its swift, brown current overflowed the banks and filled the lowlands with muddy ponds. This year, there was a tie-float in the river; that is, a company of men had chopped a large number of rail-road ties up among the forests at the head-waters of the

river, and were now floating them down to where they could be loaded on the railroad cars.

The passing of this tie-float by Springtown was always a time of interest to the boys. Ties could be seen shooting down the river some days before the men came. Some of them would lodge on sand-bars or circle about in sheltered pools until so many had collected that there would be a jam. Then the men would come, dressed in hip boots and red flannel shirts, and with long, spiked poles dislodge the ties and send them on down the current. Sometimes the men would have to jump from ties to ties at the risk of falling into the water, and the boys could readily see that much skill and bravery were needed in this work. Zeph said *he* was going to be tie-man, and some of the smaller boys envied his nearer approach to such a wonderful career.

The men would camp on the banks of the river at the place where night overtook them. That summer the camp was made at Springtown, and the boys turned out in force to watch the fires over which swung big kettles wherein boiled and baked the men's supper. The boys, alas, could feast only with their eyes as they saw the men sit about the fire and eat.

The next afternoon when the boys arrived at the river, the ties and the men were out of sight and reach, and so the boys had to content themselves with looking about. At a point a short distance above the island, they found two big ties, firmly lodged and safely hidden behind some bushes. It was generally understood that such leavings became the property of the finder. At least four boys saw these ties at the same time, and so, to avoid any disputes as to ownership, it was agreed that they should be the common property of them all.

What could be done with them? Ah, what couldn't be done? First, however, they would have to be dislodged, as the water was falling, and soon they would be high and dry.

"Robinson Crusoe made a boat out of a tree," said Will," and when it was finished he couldn't get it to the water. We don't want to be in that fix."

"Who was Robinson Crusoe?" asked one of them.

"Well, don't you know?" replied another. "He lived on an island."

Will had been looking at the island in mid-streams. He wanted to go to it. The spirit of the navigator came to him. Often he had watched the

big ocean liners glide up the Mersey and lay up to the Liverpool dock. There was fascination about a floating craft.

“Let’s make a raft out of the ties and go over to the island,” suggested Will.

The boys readily agreed. They had never been to the island, and the idea of floating to it was novel. How could they do it?

Will explained. They would first have to float the ties into still, shallow water. Then they would get some boards and nail them across the ties. This would make a “dandy” raft on which they could sail to the island and take possession of it and explore it as Robinson Crusoe had done.

Some of the boys were dispatched for boards, some for nails and a hammer and a piece of rope. By the time Will and Ned had pried the ties loose into the water, the boys returned laden with boards of all sizes and conditions and nails in all stages of rustiness. The ship-building progressed with great enthusiasm, and it was not long before the craft was pronounced finished. It was found that four of the boys could safely board it. Who should make the trial trip? Will, of course, should be one, having had

experience with boats and water travel. Three others made up the crew. Each supplied himself with a long pole, and the craft was pushed out into the stream toward the island, the other boys following and shouting gleefully from the bank. Will Jones, Captain and Pilot, directed the boys to steer into the little harbor he had noted even on the morning of his first visit to the river. Soon the raft grated on the sandy beach and the boys leaped ashore with a cheer.

“This is Peaceful Bay,” said Will Jones, with the true instinct of a discoverer; and as he climbed up to the highest point of the island, he declared: “and this is Point Lookout.” As the raft seemed slow in coming back, the boys on the bank shouted that they wanted to go over also. Three trips brought the whole company safely to the island.

From Point Lookout a tiny meadow sloped westward. On one side a few willows cast their shade, on the other side the main channel of the river rushed by. Later in the summer, the little harbor would make a fine bathing pool. The boys lay contentedly on the grass.

“Say, this is a dandy place, isn’t it?” remarked one.

“Let’s make a camp here”, suggested another.

“We can make a willow house.”

“There ain’t enough willows on the island.”

“Besides, we want them to grow for shade.”

“We can bring some willows from the bank on the raft.”

“Sure,” they all chorused.

But as they were not prepared for further building operations that afternoon, the boys had to be content with planning their work for tomorrow, and then rafting themselves back to the main-land.

The next afternoon more boys were on hand to take part in the activities on the island. Out of the eight present, there were six bosses, and each of these tried by the use of lung power to establish his claim to leadership. Among these who might rightly be called guests were Charley Voss, a cripple, and his dog, Sport, and nine-year old Bose Rankin. Sport, though belonging to Charley, readily came at the beck and call of any of the boys, so he was looked upon as common property.

By the middle of the afternoon, the willows had been cut, transported to the island, and made into a shelter as nearly like an Indian “wickiup” as pos-

sible. It was shady and cool within, and the boys stretched themselves in luxurious ease on its grassy carpet.

“We ought to have a fire,” was suggested.

“It’s warm enough without one,” said Will.

“But, it’s not a camp without a fire, is it?”

“No; of course not.”

There was some discussion whether to make the fire inside the tent or outside. It was more in keeping with the wild life they were living to have a fire within the tent, but the majority were satisfied to sacrifice realism for comfort, so the fire was made a few feet from the shelter so that those who reclined within could look out and see it.

After the boys had rested and talked for a time, they become aware of a continual barking of Sport from the direction of Peaceful Bay. Perhaps the dog saw “something”, whereupon there was a general movement to Point Lookout. From that elevation they saw that Charley Voss and his dog were on the raft which Zeph Stevens was alternately pushing out some distance from the shore with a pole and then pulling back by the rope. The dog was barking loudly, while the boy was crying and pleading with his

tormentor. Most of the boys laughed with Zeph at the fun he was having; but somehow, Ned didn't like what the bigger boy was doing. Ned went down to the water and said to Zeph:

"Let him alone."

Zeph went on teasing.

"You let him alone," repeated Ned. "Pick on somebody your size."

"Oh, you go 'long."

The boys were interested. Zeph was the biggest boy there, and they all knew that Ned was no match for him if it came to a fight. What could Ned do? But Ned persisted. He grabbed the rope and attempted to take it from the larger boy, who exclaimed:

"Say, get out o' here! What ye mean? Let go."

"I won't, an' you can't make me. You quit scaring Charley, you—you big coward."

Zeph flushed. "I'll lick you good fer that," he said.

"Then you'll have to whip me, too," said Will as he ranged himself alongside of Ned. "I think you're mean to tease a cripple."

There was a silence for a moment among them.

Then the boys shouted. Of course, the two boys were in the right, for Zeph couldn't whip both of them. Zeph muttered and let go the rope which also slipped from Ned's hands. The raft drifted slowly out toward the current in the river. Charley cried the louder while the dog only whined.

The boys became excited. In a few minutes Charley would be in real danger. Then Ned rolled up his overalls and waded out after the raft. It was only a matter of getting his legs wet and the roll in his overalls soaked. Ned soon had the rope again and Charley and Sport were safely landed.

But the matter was not yet settled. Someone had offended, and had not been punished. Something was imperfect, something was lacking in the scheme of things. The boys seemed to feel it, though they knew not what to say or do about it. Zeph tried to laugh it off, but the boys did not respond. They all went back to the willow lodge, Charley keeping close to Ned, and the dog close at the heels of his master. The conversation lagged.

"I think Zeph has done wrong," began Ned, "and he ought to 'pologize."

Zeph began to talk of something else, but Ned continued:

“I read once in a story where some men were cast on an island, an’ they had to make laws, an’ ’lect officers. We’re like that when we’re here.

“Sure.” The idea appealed to them.

“I think Zeph ought to be ’rested and tried,” suggested Slim.

“I motion that Dick be the policeman,” said one.

“I motion that Will be the judge,” cried another.

“All in favor raise their hands—your ’lected.”

“Zeph Stevens, you’re ’rested” said the policeman.

The judge tried to look solemn and wise. He knew nothing about court procedure, but as he knew all the facts, he immediately passed judgment. “Zeph Stephens,” he said, “you are guilty, and you are fined a quarter.”

“Haint got a quarter,” replied the prisoner; “wouldn’t give it if I had.”

“In place of the quarter, which would have been handy to buy some things for our camp, you can give your pocket knife,” pronounced the judge.

“I won’t.”

“Or be ducked three times in the river. That is the law of this island.”

Zeph again tried to treat it all as a joke, but the boys stood firmly by the law and the judge. With Ned and Will as leaders, they could easily give the boastful Zeph a ducking. They made ready to do it, when Zeph weakened. He pulled out his knife and handed it to Will, who offered it to Charley.

"I don't want it," said he. "I only want him to leave me alone."

"Will you promise to do that?" asked Will of Zeph.

"Of course."

"Now and always?"

"Sure."

"Well, then, it's all right. Here, take your knife."

And thus the balance of things was restored, and the boys were all jolly good fellows again as if nothing unpleasant had ever happened.



CHAPTER FIVE

In Which the Boys of Springtown Conduct a Story-telling Contest.

The water in the river was clear and warm, fine for bathing. Peaceful Bay made an ideal swimming hole, and the boys made good use of it. They would "wet over", then splash about for a time, and then crawl up on the sunny sand bank and "dry off". Sometimes this would be repeated half a dozen times during an afternoon, so that when their clothes went on for the day, the boys would appear pretty well washed out.

Frequently, when resting from the afternoon's strenuous bathing, they would tell each other stories. A number of the boys were readers of dime novels which they had obtained from the larger boys, who had bought them at Wanda. These thrilling tales were circulated among the boys who cared for reading. As a rule, the parents did not investigate closely what this literature consisted of. It was "reading", and the boy had better be quietly reading than to be up to some noisy devilment, the parents reasoned.

The boys soon came to know that the chief ingredients of a dime novel are these: The story is laid in the wild West. The characters are the hero, a brave young man from the East; the heroine, a beautiful girl; an old trapper, who is also a philosopher; a renegade (bad) white man; Indians; cowboys, good and bad. The beautiful girl is captured by the bad white man, aided by the Indians. The hero gives chase over plains and hills and deserts, and after a lot of fighting, the girl is rescued. Usually, there is a gold mine, which in the end, makes the hero rich and enables him to marry the girl and pay all the expenses of such an extravagant adventure.

By a little shifting of scenes and characters, the

boys of Springtown could tell these tales over and over. Ned Fisher was not much of a story-teller, but Will Jones, as well as some of the others, could spin out a yarn endlessly. When it came to his turn, the boys often accused him of "making up" the story. Not being very well acquainted with the American dime novel, Will's stories did not deal with the wild, western life.

Now, an island, with all that pertains to it, had always appealed to Will. An island on the map was to most of the boys only a black spot in an ocean of blue; but to Will, that dot became associated with the natives of the South Seas, or with Napoleon at St. Helena, or with Robinson Crusoe; and then the dry text of the geography changed to a garden of charm. Will liked to tell stories of islands, some of which he did not deny "making up out of his own head."

This afternoon Will was telling such a story. His hero, one Jack Tarpin, had just been shipwrecked on a South Sea island:

"Well, Jack he walked up into the land and found that the island was inhabited by wild people, savages who were nearly naked and who carried long wooden

spears. Jack was scared, so he hid in the bushes and watched them dancing about in a circle. Pretty soon they stopped, and one of them went into a hut and brought out a beautiful native maiden. They tied the girl to a big stake, and then began to pile up brush near her. They were cannibals, and were going to kill and eat the girl. Jack could hear her cry.

“Jack crept slowly forward, thinking how he could save the girl. I forgot to say that Jack had a gun, but he couldn’t kill a whole tribe with it. Pretty soon, they seemed ready to kill the girl. The savages stood in a circle about her, and they began to make a terrible noise. This was to drown the cries of the girl as they were killing her. Then one of the savages stepped out into the circle with a big club. He walked slowly toward the poor victim. Jack raised his gun and aimed at the man, and just as he was going to strike her, Jack pulled the trigger.

“The savage dropped dead. The others saw him, but did not know what had killed him. They were making so much noise that they didn’t hear the report of the gun. Another one of them now stepped into the ring with a club, and just as *he* was going to kill the girl, Jack shot *him* too. Then the cannibals be-

came very scared, for this time they heard the shot and saw the smoke, so Jack thought it would be a good time to rescue the beautiful maiden. He ran to her, and with his knife cut the thongs which bound her. She said something to him, which, of course, he could not understand; and as he was about to leave, she followed him.

Jack fired his gun again, this time into the air, to show the savages that he was the one who had killed their men. At this, the savages became so scared that they ran away. But pretty soon they returned, threw down their spears, and lay down on their faces before him. He motioned to them to get up and bring him something to eat. They brought him some coconuts and fish, and he gave some of the food to the girl.

“Well, Jack stayed with them and made them behave themselves, and he made them build him a house and bring him something to eat each day. The girl lived in a hut near by. After a while when he could understand her talk, he learned that she was the daughter of a king who had lived and reigned on another island. The two tribes were at war. This tribe had gone to the other island, and in a great

battle the king had been killed. The victors had eaten the king because they believed that by eating a brave man like the king, they also would become brave.

“Jack was now quite contented and comfortable, living like a king on the island; but the girl kept coming to him every day, crying and pointing in the direction where she had come from. So Jack got the men who were waiting on him to get out their biggest canoes and take him and the girl over to the next island. At first they refused, but Jack shot off his gun and showed them that he could protect them, then they were willing to go.

“Jack found a fine, big island. When the people saw their Princess come back alive, they were very glad. The Princess pointed to Jack Tarpin as her rescuer. Then they shouted and danced and made him king instead of their dead and eaten ruler. Then Jack married the Princess and reigned for many years over the two islands. He made the savages quit eating each other, and he made them build better houses and wear more clothes; and he made laws and roads and schools and wagons. And he had a lot of beautiful children, an’—that’s all.”

There was silence for a moment among the boys, then one asked:

“Where is that Island?”

Will, ignoring the question, turned to Charley Voss and told him it was his turn next. Charley, not being able to take part with the boys in their manual sports, had more time to read and think as well as dream about what he read; so Charley was one of their best story-tellers.

“Once upon a time,” he began, “there was a race of fairy maidens who flew about in the form of beautiful white swans. Sometimes they would lay aside their fairy dresses to bathe, when, of course, they would appear as women. One day a young man saw six of these large birds fly down to the river, and he thought he would try to find out just what they were. So he crept up to where he had seen them alight.

“In the bushes on the river bank he came across what must have been swan-robcs. There were no swans to be seen. He looked at the feather dresses curiously. He picked one of them up and found it light and fluffy. He rolled it up tightly, put it in his pocket, and carried it away.

“Pretty soon he saw the swans fly away again,

but instead of six there were only five. The young man went back to see what had become of the other one. There where he had seen the swan-robcs he found a girl hiding in the rushes by the river. She was crying because she had no clothes to put on, and was scared.

“ ‘Halloo,’ said the young man; but the girl hid closer in the rushes. ‘What’s the matter?’ he asked. ‘Can I help you?’

“ ‘You see, the young man had no idea the girl was one of the swans and that he had her magic robe in his pocket.

“ ‘Someone has taken my dress,’ she said. ‘My sisters have all gone and left me, and here I am. Ah, me! and she cried as if her heart would break.

“ ‘Well,’ said the young man, ‘that was a mean thing to do; but maybe I can help you. Wait where you are and I’ll fetch you some clothes’, and away he ran not heeding the further explanations which she wished to make.

“ ‘Pretty soon he came back with a dress which he hung on the willows, and then he went away until she put it on. When he came back, there she was, a beautiful girl with long golden hair, deep blue eyes,

rosy cheeks, and teeth like—like—well, they were milk-white. She was still so frightened that she did not know what to do; but the young man talked to her gently and told her not to be afraid. She was the most *be-au-ti-ful* girl he had ever seen, and he fell in love with her, and took her home to his mother, and after a while he married her.

“Well, they lived together for many years, and although they were poor, they were quite happy. They had three children. One day while the husband was away, the wife happened to look in the bottom of his trunk which he usually kept locked, and there she found the swan-robe which she had lost that day while she was bathing with her sisters. She lifted the dress out, unrolled it, and it came back to the same shape it was when she had worn it. If she put it on, she would be changed into a beautiful bird and be able to fly away through the blue sky to her sisters and get away from the hard work which she had to do every day. She looked out of the open window, for it was a summer day, and the land was green and beautiful. Just the other day she and her husband had quarrelled, and she had found fault with him because they were so poor. And now here was a chance to

get away from all this misery. She shook the robe again, and it seemed to say, 'Put me on.'

"Just then she heard the children playing out in the garden and she looked out at them. The little boy was chasing the two girls as they ran among the trees. They were laughing and shouting and having a good time. They were not very well dressed, and the mother had *such* a time to keep them clean; but they were good children, and she loved them very much. The mother looked at them for a long time Then the mother folded up the swan-dress again and placed it back in her husband's trunk, way down in the bottom where she had found it.

"The wife didn't say anything to her husband about what she had found, but she couldn't help thinking about the dress nearly every day.

"One day when times were harder than ever, and the mother was working in the garden, she heard a cry from overhead which made her look up. She saw five large, white swans flying up in the sky. They sailed gracefully about in circles, and their cry seemed to say to her: 'Sister, come with us, come with us. Come away from your hard work. Come and live in the warm sunshine and blue sky and cool, green grass. Come away from all your cares.'

“And then the woman threw down her hoe and went into the house. Her husband was away at his work and the children were asleep. She went to her husband’s trunk, opened it, and took out her swan-dress. She looked out into the sky again. Yes; her sisters were still there, circling about, waiting for her. She shook out the swan-dress until it looked like a white cloud. She began to take off her old calico dress. Just then the youngest of the children awoke and began to cry. The baby had not been well lately. Perhaps she also was coming down with the measles. The other children had had the measles, and *what* a time the mother had had with them. . . . She stopped for a moment in her undressing, then she went on unfastening her dress.

“Outside the swans were calling; in the other room her baby was crying.”

The story-teller stopped. There was tense silence among the boys.

“Well,” said one. “Go on.”

“That’s all,” said Charley Voss.

“All? Taint neither. Go on. What did the mother do?”

“Don’t know,” replied Charley, shifting his

lame leg. "That's just where the story stopped, and *I've* never been able to find the rest of it."

"Gee," said the boys, discontentedly, as they arose to go home.



CHAPTER SIX

Which Tells How the Boys Played Some Pranks and Paid for Them.

Early in the spring, as soon as a dry spot could be found in Springtown, marble-playing began. Then when the grass was soft to the bare feet, steal-sticks was a favorite game. Back-out was not so strenuous, but it had more daring to it. After dark, the boys were partial to run-sheep-run. During the ball season, there were usually two teams, the first and the second nines, which played with the boys from the neighboring villages.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the boys of Springtown confined themselves wholly to these wholesome games and that they were free from the mischievous pranks that boys sometime play. These pranks were sometimes in bad taste. Had these boys lived in the days of the Boy Scout movement, this untamed boy energy would have been directed into proper channels. In this chapter will be presented a number of escapades which had a special bearing on the lives of William Wallace Jones and Ned Fisher.

Not far from the Fisher home, there lived an old Scotchman by the name of O'Neal. He made a specialty of chicken-raising. The boys noted how spick and span everything about his chicken houses appeared, and how he seemed to be always white-washing his premises.

Now, a pot of white-wash with the brush can do wonders in other hands than Tom Sawyer's. Late one afternoon, Will and Ned, with three other boys, found on the O'Neal lot, a pot half full of wash, with the brush in it. They immediately began trying their hand. First a piece of the fence was whitened, then a big rock, and then looking about them for more objects, they saw a small calf lying in the grass.

“Let’s make it white, an’ see if its mother will know it,” suggested Ned.

The others were willing to try the experiment, and so the patient calf was coated from just behind its ears to the tip of its tail. It certainly looked an odd sight, and the boys were sure its mother would never know it.

Darkness came on before the boys could complete their investigations after knowledge, and they had to go home. Just as Ned and Will were finishing their suppers—so they both told each other—they heard a shot ring out from the direction of the O’Neal place. They wondered what it could mean. Ned followed his father out to investigate.

They met Mr. O’Neal carrying a gun and dragging something dead—and white, Ned observed with sinking heart.

“What have you there?” asked Mr. Fisher.

“I’ve kilt the mother skunk o’ them all,” replied Mr. O’Neal.

“Mother skunk? What do you mean?”

“Weel, sir; the skunks have been a-takin’ my chickens an’ eggs this lang time; I’ve been lying for them, an’ I’ve bagged the mother o’ them all.”

“Skunk!” exclaimed the neighbor as he looked closely at the dead animal, “have you ever seen a skunk?”

“No; but I’ve smelled ’em a guid many times; and I understand they are a litish color.”

“This is a calf. But what’s the matter with it?”

“A calf!” exclaimed the Scotchman in alarm, “Mon, how—”

Ned Fisher’s curiosity seemed to have been satisfied, for he quietly slipped back to the house and then made his way to where Will was standing by his fence.

“Say, O’Neal’s—shot—that calf,” Ned stammered.

“Shot it? What for?”

“He thought it was a skunk.”

“A skunk!” Will laughed before the seriousness of the situation came to him; but Ned did not join in the merriment. Presently, Mr. Fisher came to where the boys were.

“Did you boys whitewash that calf?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“What in the world—”

“We wanted to see if its mother’d know it.”

“Well, its owner didn’t seem to know it, anyway,” chuckled Mr. Fisher. “But, say, boys, how many of you had a hand in this?”

Ned counted five.

“That calf is worth at least five dollars. As there are five of you to blame, a dollar apiece is about right.”

A dollar each! How in the world were they ever to raise that sum? Ned had thirty-five cents which he fondly hoped to soon raise to fifty, which he was intending to spend on his gun. Will had fifteen cents only in ready cash. What the other boys had could not be determined that evening.

But the end of this unfortunate business was not so bad after all. Seeing that the boys were repentant and that they were willing to do what they could to make it right, Mr. Fisher helped them to obtain jobs where they could earn a little money. It was a wholesome experience for the boys to have to work and save to pay a debt; and when it was done, they all felt as if a heavy load had been lifted from them.

“Gee,” exclaimed Ned, “all that money to pay, and we get nothing for it.”

“Not even the calf,” added Will.

“You get the lesson,” said Aunt Martha.

Up on the hillside at the east of Springtown lived “Old Man Hansen” in one of the smallest, oldest, oddest houses in the village. Trees overshadowed it and vines covered it. All about the house grew a variety of flowers, many of which were taken indoors at the coming of winter and bloomed profusely behind the protecting window pane. Everything within the two-roomed house was odd, but neat and tidy, even as was the old man who lived there.

A narrow path led from the front door down to the gate and to the street. In the summer this path was nearly hidden by the tall overhanging grass; and it was this path which played an important part in one of the boys’ pranks.

“Old Man Hansen” lived all alone, never having had wife or children. These facts singled him out from the rest of his fellows. He was odd, he lived an odd life, and, therefore, he was a shining mark for the boys of Springtown.

When the boys thought they needed a little more exciting fun than run-sheep-run gave them, they resorted to tick-tacking. There was considerable daring required to steal quietly up to a window of the vic-

tim's house, fasten the hook bearing the nail and cord well up out of immediate reach, and then retreat to some safe place from which the ticking could be carried on. The boys had tested out a good many of the homes of Springtown. When the inmates of the house ignored them and their pranks, the game became a tame affair and they bothered that house no more. Even less fun was it when the man of the house came to the door and good-naturedly jollied the boys. But when the angry inmate tried to catch the offenders, the sport became truly exciting and worth while.

“Old Man Hansen” was one who became very much annoyed at the boys, and many were the thrilling escapes they had had from him near his house on the hillside.

On a certain moonlight evening the boys were gathered on a corner near the old man's place. They had planned, not only to tick-tack him that evening, but to add something else to their fun. In a number of places they had tied together the long grass across the path. When the tick-tacking should begin, a number of the boys would show themselves near the house, and then when the old man would come after

them, they were to lead him on into the path, and then—"It will be great sport to see him tumble," they all agreed, as they laughed at the coming sight.

Everything was ready. Ned was to pull the string which made the nail rattle on the window. Will and Zeph were to expose themselves to the attack of the enemy and lead him to his fall. The boys watched until the light went out in the window and then they went to their various positions.

Tick, tick, tick, went the nail; then a pause, and again the nail rattled against the window. Presently the light appeared once more; the old man had gotten up again. The boys lay quietly while the door opened and the old man looked out. Apparently, he saw nothing, so he went back. Tick, tick, went the nail. The door opened again. This time he saw the two boys standing near the path. They began to move away and he gave chase.

The boys ran down the hill, one on each side of the path. The old man darted after them. He was swifter than they thought, and he uttered peculiar noises as he ran. Will and Zeph scampered for all they were worth to get out of his way. He made for Zeph who crossed the path just where there was a

good strong loop. His foot caught and he was pitched headlong into the grass. Zeph gave a lusty yell, but soon scrambled up again and was off like lightning.

Then the old man got fairly into the path, and it was not long before he tripped and fell. He did not get up again to renew the chase. The boys waited within safe distance. They saw the old man sit up, but he made no efforts to rise. The boys watched for some time, but the sport was over, so they went home.

The next morning a neighbor told Mrs. Fisher, and Mrs. Fisher came immediately over and told Aunt Martha that last evening the boys had been teasing old Brother Hansen again and that he had fallen and broken his leg. He had been picked up late last night by a passer-by, or he might have been lying out all night. *Something must be done with those boys!*

Aunt Martha agreed. After Mrs. Fisher had gone, she found Will and Ned and brought them into the house. They were quite docile, for they also had heard the news. Both of them sat somewhat frightened on the bench while Aunt Martha seated herself by the table, facing them.

"I want to talk to you boys," she said, "before

the constable or the Bishop comes. Yes, both of them are likely to be here."

The boys breathed and swallowed hard.

"But if you boys are willing, I think we can adjust this trouble without the aid of either the Bishop or the constable."

The boys were more than willing.

"Well then, Brother Hansen is a poor man and depends for his living on what he raises on his lot. He is an old man, and it will take a long time for him to get out and about again. He has no one to help him. Now, who is to take care of his place, hoe and water his garden, chop and bring his wood, feed and milk his cow, and do the other chores? Who, I ask?"

The boys did not reply. They knew now what was coming.

"All right; you two boys are among the ring-leaders. You can do a lot with the other boys. You get together all the boys who were with you last night and tell them that if they do not want to go to jail they had best agree to my plans, which is that each of you must work at least an hour for Brother Hansen, about his house or lot. For a while he'll have to have a woman help in the house, which Mrs.

Fisher and I will attend to; but we must have someone to help us also. I am going up to see him this morning. You boys see the other boys today and this evening you report to me what you intend doing."

"All right," they said as they were about to withdraw.

"Just a moment," Aunt Martha said as she went to the cupboard. "I haven't any cookies today, but here's a piece of pie each. Now just sit there and eat your pie while I finish what I want to say." She leaned forward and looked the boys squarely in the face so that they could catch every word. "*Joy and sorrow are funny fellows: the more you try to pass them on to others the harder they stick to you.*"

She had the boys repeat the saying three times. "Now, remember it," she admonished. "You may not understand it fully just now, but the meaning will grow with you as you grow—Ned, your mother's calling you—you needn't go, William Wallace."

Ned slipped out; Will remained on the bench; Aunt Martha turned again to him.

"I'm writing to your mother," she told him.

“I’m going to tell her as much as I can of what good you are doing for old Brother Hansen, and I’ll tell her as little as I can the reason for your doing it. All right, run along and find the other boys.”



CHAPTER SEVEN

Wherein the Story-telling Contest is Continued.

It was raining, and therefore too wet for the boys to take to their island retreat; so they gathered in the hay loft of the Fisher barn. A new crop of hay had recently been hauled in, and the loft made an ideal place to spend a wet afternoon and tell stories.

“Old Man Hansen” was progressing favorably, for he had recovered sufficiently to sit on his little front porch and direct the boys in their self-appointed task of helping him. Some of the boys had changed

their opinions of the old man on a nearer acquaintanceship.

“The old man isn’t such a bad chap,” Will commented as he stretched himself on the sweet-smelling hay. “Yesterday, he told me that maybe he would have us boys help him all the time, we were such good workers.”

“Well, he can afford it,” said another boy, “I’ll bet he has a lot of money.”

Some agreed, others disagreed; but the conversation led to misers, and then to pirates and buried treasures, a number of stories being told about them.

“Boys,” said Ned, “here’s a riddle; who can guess it:

‘Oh, I’m a cook and a captain bold
An’ the mate of the Nancy Brig,
An’ a bo’sun tight, an’ a midshipmite
An’ the crew of the captain’s gig.’”

Ned looked wise, and admonished Will not to tell. The others shook their heads. They were not familiar with the nautical terms used. Ned, in order to help them, explained the meaning of some of the words.

“Well, how could one person be all the men on board a ship?” asked Jim.

“Give it up?”

They all did.

“Well, this was one of them pirate ships which run out of grub, an’ so they began to eat up each other, till there was only one man left.”

The problem was hardly plain yet, so Ned explained further:

“If the officers ate the crew, an’ then if the captain an’ mate an’ bo’sun ate the cook, an’ then if the captain an’ mate ate the bo’sun, an’ then if the captain ate the mate, there would only be the captain left, and wouldn’t he be all the others in himself?”

None of the boys disputed this conclusion if the premises were true, which some of them doubted.

“Well, I read it in a book,” contended Ned, which, of course, was the end of controversy.

“Say,” inquired one of the boys of Charley Voss, “Did ye find out about that swan-woman? Did she stay with her family or did she go with her sisters?”

“Never found out,” replied Charley.

“I’d like to know. I told the story at home, and

they're nearly crazy to find out. My sister said of course she went back to her beautiful bird life; dad said as how it was a stumper fer him; an' ma, she just smiled quiet like an' said she guessed she stayed with her children."

"Well—but—"

"Tell us another story, Charley."

"Let's all tell one," suggested Charley. "I'll begin an' tell a chapter, then Ned will continue an' tell another chapter, an' then one of you others, an' so on."

"Naw," objected some. "Let's" agreed the majority; so they settled comfortably on the hay while Charley began:

"Once upon a time a young man by the name of Clarence started out to find his sweetheart who was the finest singer in the world. She had been stolen by robbers. He set sail from New York, an' as the wind was blowing south, he sailed in that direction. He sailed an' he sailed, until he came to a land which was covered with trees an' swamps an' vines reaching from one tree to another. He found a place where he could sail his ship quite a ways into the land. Then he and his men got off and went into the

deep, dark forest. They had come to the Everglades of Florida.

“They traced the fleeing robbers to a big cave in these Everglades.

“‘We’ll go in here,’ said our hero.

“‘Why?’ asked his men.

“‘See,’ he replied, holding up a piece of fine cloth. ‘This came from my lady love’s dress. She must have torn it on these briars. Come, follow me.’

“They entered the cave. It was dark and led deep into the earth. They lighted their pine torches and found that the cave was in reality a tunnel which at one time had been well traveled, for there was a good road through it. After a time, they came to where it sloped up again, and soon they came out into the open and looked about and saw something which made them stare with all their eyes.—End of Chapter One. You, Dick go on with Chapter Two.”

The boys laughed at Dick as if the joke was on him, but this was the condition of the contest, that each story-teller would have to extricate the heroes of the preceding one, no matter into what straits they were brought. However, Dick had followed the narrative closely, and he already had in mind what might be in the depths of the Everglades, so he began:

“Before them they saw a beautiful city. The houses were of white marble; there were gardens of flowers and ripened fruit; there were tall palm trees and singing birds; but there wasn't any people to be seen in the city.

“Clarence and his men stood looking at this wonderful sight. What did it mean? One of the men thought that a plague must have killed off all the people. At this they were frightened, and some of them wanted to go back at once; but Clarence said, ‘No; we will investigate this mystery. Come, follow me.’

“They went into a garden, picked and ate some of the fruit, and they drank of the water in the fountain. They went through great gates of shining brass, and walked along marble paths. At last they came to a big building as big as a block. They went up to the door and there they saw a man.

“ ‘Five dollars, please,’ said the man to them.

“ ‘What for?’ asked Clarence.

“ ‘To get in,’ replied the door-keeper.

“ ‘What's going on?’

“ ‘A grand concert.’

“ ‘Five dollars to hear a concert. You must have some great singer here.’

“ ‘The greatest in the world.’

“ ‘No, you haven’t,’ said Clarence, then he be-thought himself. ‘Could that be possible! Yes, it might be.’

“ ‘Here, give me a ticket,’ said Clarence, hand-ing the man five dollars. ‘You men remain outside and watch.’

“Clarence went in and found a great crowd of people. The whole city must have been gathered there. They were very still. The concert had not yet begun. Clarence got as close to the stage as he could. He looked about at the people, and waited. Beautiful music was being played. Pretty soon the music stopped, and the curtain on the stage went up. —End of the chapter,” said Dick. “Go on, Jim.”

With such a clue Jim should have had no trouble to go on with the story, but Jim was more interested in the antics of Rover, the dog, than the story, and he had heard practically nothing of chapter two. Jim gathered his bewildered senses. The last distinct idea he had of the story was where Charley had said: ‘They saw something which made them stare with all their eyes.’ What could this be, thought the con-fused boy. The most startling thing he could think of

was that the maiden whom they were trying to rescue was dead, so Jim began:

“They found the beautiful maiden dead.”

There was a chorus of objections to this. What was the matter with Jim? There was no sense to what he said. They wouldn't have the heroine dead, not yet? Jim hadn't kept track of the story. Someone else would have to go on with it.

“All right,” said Dick, “Will may continue.”

“As the curtain went up,” said Will, “the beautiful maiden was seen to advance. Yes, Clarence knew now that the robbers had kidnapped his lady love and had taken her to this hidden city in the swamp to make their fortune by having her sing: But could she sing under such conditions? That was the question. Would she not be frightened so she could not sing? Clarence crowded forward until he could speak to her, which he did. She heard him. Her captors tried to make her go on and sing, but when she tried she could not. She tried again, but couldn't. Then the people rose and shouted that they had been cheated, and they tried to get at the managers of the show; but they escaped and took the maiden with them, with Clarence and his men in full pursuit. They all ran

through the streets of the city towards the underground passage, but they missed it and came to the edge of the big swamp which stretched out ahead of them for miles and miles. There was no way for them to get across; and now what should they do? End of the chapter. Go on, Ned."

"Gosh," said Ned. "I don't know. I can't."

"Oh, go on, go on."

"Well, the robbers found a canoe, got in it and paddled their way through the Everglades. Clarence found another canoe, and followed. At last they came to where the robbers had left their ship. They got in and sailed away. Clarence and his men found their ship also and they sailed away in pursuit. That's all. Slim, go on."

"And they sailed and they sailed," said Slim. "And they sailed and they sailed, till they got to the North Pole. They sailed past the ice bergs till they came to where the climate was warmer again. They sailed and they sailed without ever being able to catch the robbers. They sailed and they sailed, until at last they came out at the South Pole."

"South Pole!" the boys shouted in derision.

"Yes. South Pole," repeated Slim. "My

father says he knows a man who believes there's a hole right through the earth from the North to the South Pole, and that the ocean reaches all the way. —Well, when the ships came to the South Pole, they got caught in the ice, right close to each other. They froze up tight. Clarence began to figure how he could reach the other ship and rescue his lady love, when one day—End of the chapter. Your turn, Zeph."

Zeph was the poorest reader, the poorest story teller among them. At home or at school, he would never read if he could avoid it. Where was Zeph? over there asleep on the hay. "Zeph, your turn," shouted the boys.

"What y' want?" replied Zeph sleepily.

"The ships are in the ice, an' you must get them out."

"Let 'm stay."

"But you must finish the story. All but you have told a chapter, an' this is a contest. Do you give up?"

"Give up? Not much." Zeph had heard enough of the story to get an inkling of it and what was required of him. He looked at the boys for a moment as if to get the situation in hand, then he said:

"Well, jest then Clarence 'woke up and found it had been all a dream—The End."



CHAPTER EIGHT

In Which the Circus Comes Within Reach of Springtown.

The circus was coming, not of course, to Springtown, but to Wanda, only three miles away. The advance agent of the approaching wonder had already decorated the fences and sides of barns with pictures of wild and fierce animals and of beautiful ladies in light flying skirts who were breaking through paper-covered hoops, some of which were all ablaze, and were lighting on galloping horses. The boys of Springtown stood agape before these pictures.

For days before the circus came, the boys talked of nothing else. Who were going? How many could raise the price of admission? That was a burning problem with many of the boys. The Stephens barn stood near the main street, and the bill-poster had given the owner two tickets for the privilege of pasting his announcements on its broad sides. Mr. Stephens, therefore, was sure of admission; but Zeph had bitter doubts whether he would be permitted to accompany his father.

There were two nights at least each summer when the boys of Springtown did not sleep in their beds indoors. These were the nights before the coming of the circus and the night before the Fourth of July, or the night before Pioneer Day if that day was chosen for observance. On the nights before these local celebrations, the boys made their beds on the top of some hay stack, from which they could hear the first stirrings of the celebrations, and could be up and off without disturbing the family, to the school-house lot where a veteran soldier saluted the rising sun by the aid of a keg of powder and a pair of Blacksmith Goodall's anvils.

Circuses have a habit of getting into town un-

commonly early, as though they didn't want the people to see them; but the boys did not intend to miss any of the sights.

The night before the coming of the circus, six of the boys were huddled together on top of the Fisher hay stack. Mrs. Fisher had insisted that they take with them plenty of quilts, though the boys were sure they would not need them. Every year they said the same thing, and every time before morning they were glad they had them. Only their shoes and hats were laid aside, as they crawled between the blankets and lay gazing up into the clear, star-studded sky. Sleep was far from them. Usually, at least three boys were talking at the same time. Towards midnight, all but one of them had ceased, and then shortly, he also went to sleep.

But the rooster below them beat them up after all. At the first streak of day, he crowed so lustily that Ned sat up, rubbed his eyes, and called to his companions. They scrambled out much more readily than if the call had come from father or mother. They pulled on their shoes, drew on their hats and then slid down the easy slope of the stack to the ground.

Breakfast? They were not hungry, not yet. So away they went through the cold, gray dawn, down the road, across the bridge, and on to the highway toward town.

Four of the boys had the price of a ticket in their pockets, which they felt of and looked at once in a while to make sure it was there. Two of the boys had no money, not even a nickel to buy a glass of lemonade. It was a sort of trust-to-luck with them. Anyway, they would be on the ground and see what there was to see on the outside. Only two of the boys had any lunch with them, snugly forgotten, for the present, in their pockets. The others depended on getting something from their folks when they should come later in the day.

The boys had barely arrived at Wanda when the circus-train pulled in, and was switched on to a siding. The unloading began immediately. Rough, loud, dirty, swearing men swarmed about the train, and with much noise and bustle, the vans and wagons of the circus were taken from the train and hauled by the circus horses to the open square in the town. Elephants, camels, giraffes, ponies, followed in slow procession. Great bundles of dirty looking canvas

were dumped on the ground of the square, and these were attacked by groups of men. Soon the entanglement of ropes and pullies and canvas was spread out on the ground. In a short time small tents sprang up into which went many of the circus people and the horses. The raising of the big tent was a slower job. The workmen were ordered about by swearing bosses as if they were slaves. Slowly, but surely, the stakes were driven, the tall central poles were erected, and the big canvas roof swelled into the air.

The boys stood intently by, thrilled with the wonder of it all. They took care to keep out of the way of the evil-mouthed bosses. They peeped curiously into the tents where the cooking of breakfast was going on. My, how good that breakfast must be! In a few hours, the whole square was filled with tents. The big tents were in the center, from which extended in two rows, the side-shows, announced by great canvas paintings of snake-eating savages, enormously fat women, and five-legged pigs. The boys became interested in the erection of the refreshment stands, and two of them got the job of filling a big barrel of water from the nearest hydrant. They wondered if it was for the elephant, but were soon

enlightened, when, after it was filled, they saw a man get out his bottles and proceed to make the world-famous circus lemonade. First he stirred in a small bag of sugar, then a white powder, then from a small bottle, a red color; next he cut into thin slices a few lemons which floated on top and helped to give the liquid the proper appearance. Lastly, some ice was put into the barrel; and this was what later the venders loudly announced as "ice-cold lemonade."

For carrying the water, the two boys got a drink of the red mixture. They smacked their lips and said it was fine. We must remember that the small boy's imagination is brought to high tension on circus day.

Before noon, wagons began to arrive from Springtown. Mr. Fisher, who was somewhat of a horseman himself, was greatly interested in the fine horses. The hungry boys found the lunch baskets, after which they could go about their sight-seeing more comfortably.

The parade traversed the principal streets of Wanda, and the crowds followed it to the noise and dust of the circus grounds. The Fishers and the Joneses all went together, Zeph and Dick going with them. The two ticketless boys had wandered from

the others. (Later, they claimed to have crawled under the tent and to have "seen most of it.") Leisurely, the animals were viewed, and then the party went into the main tent to see the performance.

Of course, every boy—and man—who reads this story has been to the circus; therefore, there is no need of describing all that took place at this performance—for all circuses are very much alike. Our boys were especially interested in the trapeze performers, the bare-back riding, and the clowns. One clown tried to ride a bucking donkey, much to the merriment of the crowd. Then along came a simple looking man acting as if he had wandered into the tent and was somewhat lost. He saw the clown and the donkey, and expressed a desire to try what he could do. The clown was willing. The man climbed on the donkey and was instantly thrown headlong into the ring. He climbed on again, and this time the donkey set out on a fast run around the ring with the man clinging to the animal's mane and shouting as if he was very scared; but then the rider leaped up and stood on the donkey's back, threw off some clothes and appeared in the shining costume of a circus rider. Then along came a beautiful white horse, and the rider leaped upon his back, and away they went.

Then came trotting into the ring a good-sized Shetland pony with a little white-clad girl on its back. They made such a pretty picture that even the band stopped playing; the clowns quit their pranks; the peanut venders rested from their labors. Slowly, the pony walked around the ring lifting his feet and bowing as if he were greeting the people. Then he galloped gently, and the little girl stood up, waving her hand and smiling. Attendants now brought in some ladders and boxes, and the horse with its rider was put through some tricks with these. Just then there was a commotion in the other end of the tent, and around the area came a galloping donkey, hitched to a clumsy cart. It seemed that this act had gotten in out of its order, and there was some strenuous efforts to stop it; but before this could be done, the cart had hit the pyramid of ladders with the pony on it and sent them all crashing to the ground. Luckily, the little girl jumped unharmed out of the way, but the pony was hurled with such force that when it attempted to rise it stood on three legs for a few moments and then sank down again. The circus men soon placed the horse on a piece of canvas and drew it out of the ring. Then the band struck up again, and the performance went on.

But the boys could not forget the unfortunate accident; and after the close of the performance, Ned and Will prevailed on Mr. Fisher to go with them to the tent of the horses and make further enquiries.

"I'm interested in horses," explained Mr. Fisher to the man in charge, as an excuse for his coming. "I would like to know how the little pony is?"

"Are you a veterinarian?" the man asked.

"Not exactly; but I have had a long experience with horses."

"Well, come in and take a look at him. I'm afraid he's done for. Leg badly crushed, if not broken."

They entered the tent. The pony was lying on some straw with its head fastened down so it could not get up. It seemed to look up at them with pleading eyes; at least, that's what Will Jones thought, and his heart went out to the suffering animal. Mr. Fisher examined the injured leg carefully. "It's rather bad," he said.

"Bad! yes; I should say!" agreed the man. "One of our best acts gone to—We're on the move all the time, an' we can't be bothered with a broken-legged horse. I guess we'll jest have to knock him in the head."

“O, don’t,” pleaded Will, impulsively—“give him to me—maybe he’ll get better—please.”

The man looked at Will, then at Mr. Fisher. “Do you think there is any chance?” he asked.

“Well, there might be.”

“Suppose I give him to the boy here. Take him and try your hand. I hate like the devil to kill the beast. The little girl—, ah, here she is now.”

The little performer came running in. “O, my Prince, my poor Prince,” she cried as she kneeled, and put her arms about the pony’s neck. “What can we do for you? Oh, please, can’t you make his leg better?”

“Now look here, my dear,” said the man, “you must not carry on so. I fear Prince is done for—but at any rate he cannot travel just now. This man, who understands horses, has kindly offered to take him and see what can be done for him. With care and a long rest, he might get better.”

Mr. Fisher was about to protest—he had no desire to be burdened with a sick horse; but the circus man winked at him aside as if to say, “This is only to pacify the little girl.”

“Yes, sure, we’ll take care of him,” agreed Will.

“And you’ll make him better?” pleaded the girl as she stood before Will and looked him in the face.

“We’ll try,” stammered the boy.

“And when we come back here again next year, my Prince will be well.” Again she placed her arms about the horse and she kissed him on the forehead. Then with tearful eyes she shook hands with the two men and the two boys, and then went on her way.

The outcome of this incident was that when the noise and the confusion of the departing circus had subsided, Mr. Fisher looked questioningly at the boys and the boys looked in like manner at him, and they all looked at the pony. Then Mr. Fisher obtained liniments and splints and bandaged the horse’s leg in a very professional manner. “The leg isn’t broken,” he said to the boys. “We’ll get him to the nearest stable and leave him there for a while. Then we’ll see.”

This was done. In the cool dusk of evening the boys rode back home. They were hungry and tired, but elated that they had a real circus pony which might get well—and besides, had they not shaken hands with one of the beautiful lady circus riders!



CHAPTER NINE

Which Tells of the Circus Coming to Springtown.

Prince, the circus pony, did get better; and one fine day a troupe of boys, led by Ned and Will, brought him proudly into Springtown. He was lodged in Mr. Fisher's best stall, though it was well understood that a half ownership in the horse belonged to Will. The horse was fed on the choicest of hay, cared for, petted, and waited on as if he were in very deed of royal lineage.

The horse took it all in good part, and readily made friends with the boys. On sunny afternoons

they led him out to the pasture where he nibbled the sweet grass and kicked up his heels in frolic.

"I'll bet he's glad to get away from the circus," one of the boys ventured.

"It's not natural for horses to ride on the train," said another.

"And they get nothing but dry hay," added a third.

Thus the boys were trying by force of words, at least, to justify themselves in keeping Prince away from the charm and wonder of circus life. They, of course, would much prefer the glorious career of that life, but then they were not horses. With horses, it must be different. They watched Prince to see if he pined for the circus ring or the charming young lady who used to perform on his back, but as far as they could discern, he was quite content with his humbler surroundings and life.

For some weeks after the circus, the boys had no use for the usual games and sports. Even the island was neglected. All of them were playing circus. They were turning handsprings, walking on their hands, standing on their heads; horizontal bars were made in all the yards, on which skin-the-cat and other

feats were performed; trapezes were hung in barns where there was plenty of soft hay on which to fall; old, gentle horses were trotted about the improvised rings in the corrals, and the boys practiced all sorts of fancy riding on their bare backs.

But, of course, all these paled into insignificance in the presence of the real circus horse which was with them. As Prince became quite firm on his hurt leg, his owners (Ned and Will) tested him to see if he had forgotten any of his tricks. Even Mrs. Fisher and Aunt Martha took a hand in this, and to the delight of the two families and a score of boys, the pony, with a little urging went through many of the tricks it had been accustomed to do in the circus tent.

"Let's have a circus," said Ned one afternoon to the boys.

"Let's—let's."

Wonderful possibilities came before them. What could not be done with a real circus horse as the leading attraction! Who should be the rider? Girls were out of the question, besides, there were no such girls in the whole of Springtown as the one in the circus. Of course not. Who should be the clown? The riders and the clowns were conceded to be the

most important parts of a circus. And so, after much talking, and some disagreements and arguments, it was decided that the two who had the best right to play the leading parts were Ned and Will. Ned being the best rider, the riding act was given to him. Will was to play the clown. Where were they to get a donkey or a pig as they had seen in the circus? But perhaps they could find some other funny things for the clown to do. "Sure," said the other boys a little enviously.

Of course, they could not get a tent in which to perform, so they looked about for some other suitable inclosure. The Fisher yard was made of poles through which the people could not only look but crawl, if they desired, so that would not do. The Stephens yard was inclosed by a high board fence, and the management of the forthcoming circus obtained permission to use this yard for the performance, for there was to be a charge for admission—five cents for grown-ups; but what could they charge children was a much mooted question, for this was before the days of pennies.

The boys cleaned the yard for the ring, erected the trapeze and the bars, and then went into train-

ing. It was a hard matter for the parents to get them to do their usual morning's work; but with the assistance of Mr. Fisher's, Mr. Stephen's and Aunt Martha's authority, the rule of forenoon work was fairly well enforced.

As boys learn quicker than men, it was hardly a week before the citizens of Springtown read the following announcement, written with blue crayon on brown paper and posted on the Stephen's barn over the ragged remnants of the circus posters:

CIRCUS
THE WORLD FAMOUS HORSE PRINCE
WILL PERFORM
ALSO THE CLOWN
AND MANY OTHERS
NEXT SATURDAY AT 2 p. m.

Tickets, 5 cents; Children two for five.

ALL COME

As this was the first time any part of a real circus had ever come to Springtown, there was considerable interest in the event, not only among the boys, but among the parents. The promoters of the enter-

prise did not sleep on the hay stack the night before, but they were up early nevertheless, putting the finishing touches to the yard where the performance was to be held, getting the tickets ready—for of course, there must be tickets—finding costumes, and rehearsing some of the more difficult parts of the performance.

About an hour after the advertised time, the circus was ready to begin. A number of grown-ups mingled with the boys and girls which constituted the audience. Mrs. Fisher and Aunt Martha were there, as also was the Manager of the Co-op store. Zeph, who was the policeman, had a hard job to prevent the boys who had no money from climbing over the fence or from peeping through the cracks and knot holes.

At last everything was ready, and Ned Fisher, dressed in a long coat and high-topped boots stepped into the ring and cracked his father's buggy whip. Immediately, Prince was led out and paraded about the beaten track. Ribbons were tied to his mane and tail. He stepped quite proudly as though he was aware of his importance. Ned managed to have him lift his foot and nod his head to the people, much to their delight. Then he was taken back to his stall

while the other performers played their parts. Dick Johnson skinned the cat with ease. Slim Larsen stood on his head on the horse blanket, made into a mat. Then all the performers came in at once, including the clown. With painted face and baggy trousers, he did look funny, and the people shouted and laughed. A sort of leap-frog game was then played, in which the clown appeared to be very awkward, and tumbled foolishly among the boys. Then there was some "daring" trapeze performances wherein one of the boys unintentionally landed head first on the old straw pile in the corner. Then the ring master strode forth and announced in important tones that now would come the grand act, wherein the famous circus horse could take the leading part. The ring was cleared.

Presently, Prince came prancing out with Ned on his back. Ned had on tight-fitting knee trousers, pink stockings, and a green waist. Proudly, the horse and rider passed as in review before the admiring eyes of those present. Then the horse stopped while Ned stood on the horse's back. Carefully, both horse and rider went around the ring, then Ned slid down again to a sitting position.

It was at this point where the grand double riding act should be performed by Ned and Will; therefore, the clown made his appearance and stood looking at Ned and his steed.

"Huh," the clown grunted, "I kin ride that hos."

The haughty rider did not deign to notice the clown; Prince stepped proudly about the ring.

"Say, let me try," begged the clown.

"You can't ride," scornfully declared Ned.

"I kin too—I'll show ye." He began to climb to the horse's back, from whence, it had been planned, he should slide awkwardly and in funny ways, after which he should push Ned off altogether and gallop off with Prince mid the cheers of the spectators.

Now, strange to say, in all this preparations for circus performing, some one had been overlooked and therefore entirely neglected—that was Sport, the dog. Humbly he had followed the boys, and had been a patient observer through all their antics; but now he could stand this neglect no longer. He also must play a part; so right at the moment when the clown had climbed up again and sat awkwardly backward on the horse, Sport bounded into the ring, and with a sharp, joyous bark went after the royal Prince's heels.

The horse, frightened, started forward to a gallop around the ring. The clown, instead of tumbling off, clung the firmer to the horse. As the speed increased, Ned grasped the flying mane, and Will dug his knees into the horse's flanks. Faster, faster, they went, Sport at their heels as though he were the whole show. The crowd hooted and laughed. Prince, now thoroughly vexed, tried to shake the boys off, but they clung grimly on. Faster became the pace. The dust flew, the air was filled with the din of shouting and excitement. Sport stuck to his game.

Aunt Martha and Mrs. Fisher became alarmed. "Stop them," they shouted to some of the men who seemed unable to move for holding their sides in laughter. "They'll get hurt. Can't you stop them?" cried the women.

Aunt Martha moved out into the ring. "Whoa, whoa," she cried and waved her hands. The horse changed his course. Out through the admittance gate he bolted, upsetting the ticket seller and his nickles. Down the road he galloped and into the lane which led to the pasture. As he leaped the ditch by the willows, a low-hanging branch caught the boys and pushed them off into the mud and water!

The whole circus rushed pell-mell after them. The boys got up, a little dazed, looked at the mud on their clothes, and then grinned back at the grinning, questioning crowd about them.

The circus was over.

“The show was worth a dollar,” laughed the Manager of the Co-op to the Postmaster as they went back to business.

Prince was found in the lower pasture gently cropping the newest grass. The blue ribbon was still decorating his tail.



CHAPTER TEN

*In Which the Boys Become Interested in Theatricals
and Take Part in an Outing to the Hills.*

As the activity in circus performances lessened among the boys of Springtown, the spirit of the drama took possession. One of the causes for this was that the Springtown Dramatic Company put on the improvised stage in the rock meeting-house "Black-eyed Susan" and "Box and Cox" to the delight and inspiration of the boys. Then there came a traveling troupe into the village with "Rip Van Winkle." As the price of admission to this imported performance

was harder to reach than that to the home-made one, all the boys did not attend; but they were told all about the wonderful Rip and the little men in the hills and the dog.

Some of the boys had helped set the stage for the local performance, so they had an idea what was required by way of scenery and wings and curtain; but of course, they never hoped in their own performance to reach the perfection attained by the home company, the adult players having for their stage manager one Tom Brown, a painter of scenes, who had had previous experience in such things back in New York. This Tom Brown kindly loaned the boys some plays to read, and in other ways helped them to get started.

The trouble with selecting a play was that all of them called for female parts and none of them provided for a horse as the chief actor? Some of the boys suggested that the girls' parts could be left out and a part for a horse put in; but when this was actually attempted with "The Corsican Vandetti," they found the dialogue did not make sense. The only way out of the difficulty was to have one of the boys dress up as a girl. The discussion on who should do this was

long, but at last it was decided that Dick should play the part of the girl because he had a sister about his size from whom he could borrow some clothes.

Prince, the circus pony, could be worked in readily, for some of the actors could make their entrances on his back. Whether the horse was to be used by the hero or the villain was also a matter for heated discussion. It was finally decided that the hero had better have the horse, for it was necessary at a certain point in the play for the hero to make great haste to rescue his lady love from danger.

“How are ye goin’ to get the horse up the loft?” piped Bose Rankin at this point in the argument.

The boys laughed at their own forgetfulness, for they knew all the time that the only available place for their theatrical performances was Mr. Rankin’s hay loft which was roomy, free from hay, and had a fairly good floor. Prince, along with the girls, was out of it.

The parents of the boys gave them some help in fitting up their stage, for they reasoned that they were better engaged thus than “chasing the streets.” So every afternoon there was much stir about the barn and much rehearsing of parts until they were

ready to present to the public the "Corsican Vandetti."

The audience which greeted the boys on the afternoon of the opening performance was small but select, for every one had to climb the one ladder which led to the loft. The manager of the Co-op, remembering what value he had received for his money at the circus performance, was in attendance. This man was usually interested in the doings of the boys, anyway, for he had a boy just approaching the age when he could be admitted into the "crowd." A number of the parents were also there. Although the play was supposed to be very tragic, the grown-ups laughed heartily at the performance as if it were a rollicking farce. The only serious hitch in the play was when the heroine, (Dick) being asked to lay aside her hat, took off wig and all which revealed the grinning Dick to the gaze of the laughing company.

The performance ended without accident. The barn did not catch fire; the fat Mrs. Thompson did not break through the loose board in the floor; nor did anyone fall down the ladder. The boys announced that the following week they would present the rip-roaring farce, "The Coal Heavers' Revenge."

This they did, Ned Fisher and Will Jones taking the parts of the two revengeful darkies.

This performance ended the boys' dramatic season: Mr. Rankin had bought some more cows, therefore he needed more hay, consequently he required the barn, accordingly the boys had to get out.

One of the events in Springtown was the annual ward outing to the hills. The usual place of encampment was some miles up in the canyon on a high tableland beyond what was called "The Notch." This "Notch" consisted of an opening in the ridge which looked as if some fabulous monster might have taken a bite out of the mountain range. The outing usually lasted two or three days, and all the boys of Springtown who were physically able went.

Food and tents and bedding were loaded into the big farm wagons, and about noon the company began the journey. That summer the outing was later than usual and the hills were beautifully decked with brilliantly hued autumn leaves. It was a keen joy to breathe the cool, invigorating air, filled as it was with the wild aroma of the hills. As they traveled up the road, the mountains echoed with songs and glad shouts.

Ned Fisher rode in his father's wagon, in which were also the Jones family, excepting Will, who was mounted on Prince. Prince had been transferred to the Jones new barn. Uncle Josiah had recently bought a cow and had built a barn. Mr. Fisher had plenty of good work horses, and had no particular use for a pet such as Prince, so he prevailed upon Ned to make some kind of trade with Will so that the complete ownership of the circus animal might pass to the neighbor's boy. This was done, so now Prince shared with the cow the small, new barn of his owner. Since the transfer, Prince had come down to the menial work of going after the cows. The boys sometimes wondered what Prince thought about such a "come-down;" but if he thought about his changed condition at all, no one was aware of it. The horse appeared quite at home with the boys and whatever they were doing. He was one of the "the crowd." He had long since been forgiven the trick he had played them on the day of the circus, as had also Sport, perhaps the direct cause of the trouble.

Some time before the sun went down, the procession reached the camping grounds. Tents were pitched in a green meadow near a quaking-asp grove

by the creek. Dry brush-wood was gathered and preparations made for the cooking of supper. Then, when smoke and the odor of frying foods had put a keenness to their hunger, the company sat about in small groups and ate their supper from the white table-cloths spread on the grass. Why is it that food tastes so much better when eaten from the ground up in the hills than from the table at home?

When supper was over and the dishes were out of the way and the cool air came on with the darkness, one big community fire was built, about which the whole company gathered. Songs were sung, stories were told, and experiences of pioneer days were related. Then about ten o'clock, the Bishop led in prayer, a wonderful prayer it seemed to Will Jones, there in the quiet of the hills, with the breeze in the tree-tops, the soft splashing of the creek as a tuneful undertone, and the stars overhead.

Then they went to bed—and it was next day before they were aware of it. The boys got up without urging, likewise washed their faces in the cold stream, and were soon ready for breakfast.

That day each group was left very much to its own resources. Ned and Will with a number of other

boys explored the surrounding hills, found a few berries, and came back to camp about noon ready for dinner. In the afternoon, Mr. Fisher went with the boys to a sand-stone ledge near the "Notch" and as they were sitting in the sunlight looking down on the valley below, Mr. Fisher asked:

"Boys, have you ever heard of the Gadianton robbers?"

Some of them had, but it was all very dim in their memories; they were eager to know more.

"When I was a boy," said Mr. Fisher, "I used to haul wood from these hills with my father. He it was who told me first about these robbers, but, of course, later I read about them in the Book of Mormon. It was my father's opinion that these robbers used to live right here in these mountains after they were driven out of the country where they used to steal and kill and do all manner of wicked things. Father took me to a cave up there near that ridge, which, I am sure, would hold hundreds of men."

"Is the cave there yet?"

"I suppose so; I haven't been there for ten years."

A big cave where robbers had been! What an opportunity!

“Can’t we go to it?” asked Ned.

“Yes, if you would like the climb.”

“Are—would there be—do you think there are any robbers there now?” asked one of the boys.

“Oh, no,” laughed Mr. Fisher. “The robbers are all dead hundreds of years ago.”

There were no well-defined trails over the hills toward the cave, so the walking was slow, as the boys followed their leader, like as in a game of back-out, around ledges of rock and thickets of brush. They were quite out of sight of the camp when they reached the cave.

The cave proved all that had been said about it. It stretched away in darkness far into the mountain. Mr. Fisher looked about, and presently found something on the sand-stone floor which he moved with his stick.

“Hum,” he said.

“What is it?” asked Ned.

“Only some traces of bears.”

“Bears? are there bears here?”

“There have been some not long ago; this is their leavings.”

Robbers, and then bears! Well, here was excite-

ment enough. Though the robbers were long since dead, the bears might be very much alive. The boys looked at Ned's father. He did not appear afraid, so they took courage and followed him and his pine torch into the darkness of the cave. The cave opened into other rooms. The guide held the torch above his head and shouted into the big blackness. His voice echoed dismally, and then everything became intensely silent.

The party walked about for some time, then made its way back to the opening and daylight. As they stood blinking in the sunlight, they heard shouting down in the valley. They wondered what it could be, and if they were missing any fun.

Presently, a crackling of brush was heard from down the hillside. It came nearer, yet nearer to the group standing in the mouth of the cave, staring intently down the hill. Then they saw a big black object spring across an open space and begin to climb up the hill toward the cave.

A bear!

Up it came—straight for them! A few more leaps, and it would be on them! The boys stood terrified. What could they do? They had no weapon

with which to defend themselves. On came the bear in leaps and bounds! Then the boys let out a terrific scream, and Mr. Fisher waved his torch which was yet smoking. The bear slowed, then stopped. He had seen and heard. He was no doubt making for the protection of the cave from some enemies below, but he saw the entrance to be blocked. The animal hesitated, then bounded away along the side-hill and was soon lost to view in a grove of timber.

The boys were weak in the legs, and their faces were pale as Mr. Fisher looked laughingly at them and said:

“We were too many for him, I guess, boys.”

As they clambered down the hills, strength came again to their legs and color to their faces; and then, when assured they were safe, how they did talk!

“I jes wisht I’d had my gun,” said Ned; “I’d a-fixed him!”



CHAPTER ELEVEN

Wherein Ned and Will Spend an Evening with "Old Man Hansen" with Mutual Profit.

The days became short, the nights cold, and the fall rains began. For the boys of Springtown this meant the end of the joyous summer and the beginning of potato digging and of school. Some of the boys said they would "rather" pick potatoes than bend over a copy-book, though both were back-breaking jobs. Others of the boys liked school. Ned Fisher was among the first mentioned, Will Jones

among the latter; he had always been fond of books, and it had been through his efforts that others of the boys had taken more of a liking to reading.

The first snow came early that year, and it was not long before the stiller ponds were frozen over, furnishing skating and sliding for the boys. On Saturday afternoons when the boys had tired themselves out with skating or sliding, or when the ice was poor, the Fisher hay-loft was still a good place to meet, especially by the big open west door through which the sun shone warm on the hay. One such an afternoon, the boys were reading Robinson Crusoe. Will had received from his mother in England a fine copy of the book, and the boys were intensely interested in it. Even Zeph had wanted to take the book home to finish the chapter on the rescue of Crusoe's man Friday; but, no, that wouldn't be fair; so here they were that afternoon dead to all the world except to that favored and exchanged isle away off in the tropical ocean.

"Zeph-a-ni-ah!—"

"Oh, shucks!" exclaimed that boy in disgust. "I've got to go. Stop till I come back, now."

They were nearly to the end of a chapter, so Zeph

lingered until it was completed. Then, as had been agreed, the book was closed until such time when they could all be present. The talk then ranged from school to sleigh-riding, and many other things.

“Say, what did Old Man Hansen want of ye?” asked one of the boys of Will.

“Oh, he just wanted me to help him with some work,” replied Will.

“Well, I guess he paid ye, didn’t he? I heard he had a lot of money tied up in a stockin’ an’ hid somewhere in his house. He’s a regular miser, ain’t he?”

“I don’t think so,” replied Will. He’s poor. “He *wants* to pay me, but I don’t take anything. He’s not well yet from that broken leg.”

“Shucks, I wouldn’t work fer nothin’.”

“Aunt Martha says I’m only paying back—an’ I guess that’s so—What’s the matter ‘Sport?”

The dog which had been lying quietly with the boys had arisen and was growling at something. Presently, a man emerged from the hay and slouched out of the barn and down the road.

“A tramp!”

“A mean-looking one, too.”

“He didn’t want us to see him.”

“Mother said only yesterday,” remarked Ned, “that she was sure a tramp was sleeping in our barn.”

Zeph came back presently and as there was time for another chapter, the book was again opened, and away they all went back to the Robinson Crusoe island.

“Old Man Hansen” had taken a liking to Will Jones; that was plainly evident; and what was more, Will had taken a liking to him. Brother Hansen, as Aunt Martha always called him, was surely odd, but beneath a rough exterior lay a warm, true heart; and this heart Will discovered. At least some part of the evenings twice a week, Will went up to the old man’s house and sat with him at the lamp-lighted table and read to him from the Semi-weekly *Deseret News*. Then the old man in his poor English told him of his adventures in many parts of the world. Especially, he liked to tell how he had joined the Church in far-away India, and what a time he had had in getting to Zion. As the boy listened, he began to realize more fully what a wonderful thing this “Mormonism” is; and he began for the first time to understand why his mother had become a “Mormon” and wanted him to grow up a faithful member in the Church.

The Sunday evening following the Saturday when the boys had seen the tramp go out of the barn, Will whistled at Ned Fisher's gate.

"Goin' to meetin'?" asked Will of Ned when he appeared.

"Well, I—I don't know."

"I'm goin' to Old Man Hansen's to spend the evening. Come an' go along."

"All right; I'll tell mother."

Ned was out again in a moment, and together the boys went on up the path leading to the old man's house. The night was cold, and dark storm-clouds hung low on the hills. They found Brother Hansen sitting by his kitchen stove. He looked very lonely, indeed, but he brightened at sight of his visitors. Slowly, as if painfully, he arose and greeted them and placed chairs for them. He turned up the wick of his lamp of curious workmanship which now cast a cheery light throughout the room.

The old man looked at the boys quizzically from under his bushy eyebrows. "You don't come to tick-tack to night," he said.

"No," replied Will, "mother sent you a piece of cake and some jam. She said she was sorry you was

not well enough to go to meetin'; so we've come to keep you company."

"Tank you, tank you. I am sorry I cannot go to meeting, but I am glad you come." He poked the fire in the stove and put on more coal. Then he drew his chair up to the table and motioned for the boys to do the same.

"I did not get my paper yesterday," said Brother Hansen.

Will was glad in a way, for he would much rather hear him talk than to read to him. Besides, Ned hadn't heard many of the old man's stories, and Will was eager that he should.

"Tell us about India," suggested Will. "Ned here hasn't seen your maps and pictures."

The old man went to a desk, from which he drew a number of maps, some books and a package of pictures which he placed on the table. Specimens of shells, large and small, of coral, of woods and leaves and barks were brought out and placed in exhibition before the boys. Then, led on by Will's questionings, the old man talked about the places where these things had been obtained. He pointed out locations on the map, and showed pictures of all sorts of out-of-

the-way places. The boys were intensely interested.

“Now, tell us about India,” repeated Will.

“India? but I’ve been to oder places than India. See!” He traced with his finger on the map the routes he had traveled—from Copenhagen to Iceland and to Greenland, and many times around Cape Horn—

“Where it’s stormy,” interrupted Will, wishing to show his knowledge.

“Yees; it *is* stormy dere, den up de coast to Juan Fernandez, where we stopped vonce for vater. Do you know vot happened der?”

The boys looked up while the old man held a not too steady finger on the map and gazed wisely at them. The boys shook their heads.

“Dat’s Robinson Crusoe’s island.”

What! and they had not known that; the boys looked steadily at the tiny spot in the South Pacific; then they asked so many questions about the island that there seemed danger of them not getting away from it that evening. At the first opening, the old man went on:

“Den, I’ve been to New Zealand, an’ to Australia, an’ to New Guinea; I’ve been to Manilla, to Hong-

kong, an' to Yokohoma; yees, I've been to India many times."

His trips to India were before the days of the Suez Canal, so they had to sail around the Cape of Good Hope. At one time he was wrecked off the coast of Africa and had a thrilling escape from savages: "But de Lord saved me—for a purpose," he said humbly.

"My, but you have seen a lot of places," remarked Ned. "Now, tell us the most be-au-ti-ful place you have ever been in."

The old man's face became grave as if in profound thought, and the boys looked up into it, and noticed the deep wrinkles in it. It seemed a long time before he could weigh the evidence for and against all the beautiful places he had seen to determine which was the most beautiful; but, at last he said:

"I tink de leetle town of Dal in Denmark is de most peautiful spot on de eart."

The boys were astonished. Surely Paris or Berlin or some place in the South Seas would be more beautiful than a Danish village; but the old man gave the boys no time to question this decision. He went on:

“Ven I joined de Church in India, as I told you, I vent back to my home in Denmark to tell my folks of de good tings I had found. Vel, de would not listen to me—did not vont me nor my religion, an’ so I had to go away.”

Brother Hansen went again to the desk, and from a drawer brought a package of photographs. He fumbled among them, drawing out a number. “Dis is my fader and dis my moder,” he explained; “dese are my sisters. I have no broders; and dis”—he untied a carefully wrapped one—“an’ dis is Marie.”

The old man sat back in his chair and looked at the boys as they examined more carefully this picture. It was a photograph of a Danish girl with round face and smooth hair and plain, simple dress. The room became very still. Then, suddenly, there came a knock at the door.

“Come in,” said Brother Hansen.

The door opened slowly, and in the opening stood a man. “Excuse me,” he began hesitatingly, “but could you give a hungry man something to eat?”

“Come in,” again invited the old man, arising.

“No, thank you; just a piece of bread and butter.”

The boys looked closely at the visitor who shrank back at their gaze. Brother Hansen went to his cupboard, prepared a jam sandwich, and gave it to the beggar, who thanked him and hastily retreated. The old man closed the door again, and then came back to the table. "Poor fellow," he said.

The boys looked again at the photograph of Marie. "And who is this, did you say?" asked Will.

"Dat's Marie. Ven my folks would not have me or my religion, I went to her. She believed same as I, ven I explained to her; but her folks was angry too, O, so angry! Marie, she was de most *beautiful* girl in Denmark, an' so good! I had to leave. I went to Spain, den to New York. Ven I got back, back to de leetle town of Dal in Denmark, Marie was dead!"

The boys could see something like tears creep slowly down the old man's wrinkled face; but soon he brushed them away, smiled again, and then when the boys got ready to leave, he brought out the cake and jam which Will had brought. Though the boys mildly protested, they had to have a taste before leaving. Then he thanked them for coming and asked them to come again soon, which they promised to do.

The boys were silently busy with their own thoughts until they arrived at Ned's gate. Then Ned said:

"I'll bet that fellow who came to Old Man Hansen's is a tramp—the same one who ran out of our barn yesterday."

"Sure he was—and say, he heard some of the boys say the old man was a miser and had money in the house. He came to rob him."

"I bet he did!"

The boys being at the house scared him off; but he might come back. They ought to tell somebody—the constable. Meeting had let out, and among the last to pass was the town constable. The boys stopped him and told him their story and their fears. The officer looked his doubts, but offered to accompany the boys up to the old man's house, which he did, and the three stationed themselves in the bushes near by.

The night was cold, and it was far from comfortable standing there waiting. The officer said the boys had brought him on a wild goose chase, and he was going home. They pleaded with him to stay a while, but to no avail. He went home.

Then the light went out in the house they were watching. The old man had gone to bed. The boys shivered with cold, and, it must be admitted, with fright. A dark object came up the path toward them. It was only Sport, who came humbly wagging his tail as if asking pardon for thus intruding. "You rascal," said Ned. They would make too much noise in sending him back home so they told him to "lay down" and be quiet. After all, there was some comfort in having Sport with them.

Presently, as they watched, a man came slowly up to the door. It was the tramp come back. Their fears were well founded. He tried the door, but finding it fastened he went around to the window. He began to fumble with it, trying to open it.

What could they do?

"We must scare him away," whispered Will.

The tramp seemed to have gotten the window open.

Just then the boys gave vent to the loudest calls they were capable of. They shrieked in terror, and Sport jumped up and added his bark to the noise. The tramp immediately left the house and ran through the lot away from the boys. The shouting

had attracted the attention of the constable who turned back just in time to catch the tramp as he came cross-lots to hide in a barn. The old man, hearing the racket, got up again, lighted his lamp, and came to the door just in time to see the boys and the dog chase past into the street toward home.

So that night there was some excitement in Springtown. What with the calming of old Man Hansen, the viewing the captured desperado now safely lodged in the jail, and listening to the wild-eyed narratives of Ned and Will, the citizens of the village did not get to sleep until some time past midnight.



CHAPTER TWELVE

In Which the Bishop Talks to the Boys, and William Wallace Is Called upon to Make a Sacrifice.

At the Sunday evening meeting after Christmas, the Bishop of Springtown read out the names of six boys which, he explained, he wanted to meet at his home the following evening. At the appointed time, the boys—Will and Ned among them—with much speculation of what was wanted of them, appeared at the home of the Bishop.

Mary, the Bishop's daughter, invited them into

the warm, cosy parlor and told them to be seated. "Father will be in shortly," she explained; "and while you are waiting, you are to eat an apple;" at which she passed a plate of the rosiest of apples. When the fruit had been disposed of, all but the tiniest cores which the Bishop's daughter collected from them, the Bishop came in. He shook hands with each of them, and asked them how they liked his apples. He did not give them time to answer in many words, but went on talking as he seated himself where he could look the boys squarely in their faces.

"Well, boys," he said, "I have been watching you for some time—" The boys glanced at each other in dismay—"and although you are up to a good deal of mischief, you are generally pretty good boys. Now, all good boys in this Church should grow better and more useful as they grow older; and the best way to do this is to receive the Priesthood and have some responsibilities placed upon them."

The fears of the boys vanished somewhat.

"I think all you boys are worthy to receive the Priesthood and to be ordained to the office of Deacon. But first, let me tell you something about this Priesthood which all boys do not think of or understand.

“The Lord in bringing to pass His purposes, works with the means at hand. On the earth, this consists of the people who live here. So the Lord gives some of the authority which He has to those who are worthy and will accept it and help Him with it. This authority we call Priesthood.

“All you boys know that when a seed is planted in the ground, it sprouts very slowly. You cannot see it grow; you can only see that it has grown from day to day. In order to mature, a plant must have, besides the soil, water, sunshine, and warmth. Again, that which grows quickly is not of much value: a mushroom springs up during the night, but a great oak tree takes a hundred years to mature.

“Now, when the Priesthood is given to a man or a boy, it is like planting a seed in his soul. If he will take proper care of it, it will grow to something of great value—something beautiful and strong; but it takes time. When the brethren will place their hands on your heads and bestow the Priesthood upon you, there will be no difference in you that you or anybody else can see. The seed only has been planted, and it will take time for that seed to grow and bear fruit. You cannot see it grow; time only will show a

growth. The boy who will use and develop the gift he has received will grow in all the things which go to make a good, fine, strong man; but the boy who neglects to take care of his gift by not doing his duty will grow only in body.

“There are differences in men as well as in plants, and we all can see those differences. For instance, I know two men who received the Priesthood on the same day when they were boys about your age. One of them took the right care of his gift, and now he is a fine, very much respected man, one whom you all know and honor. The other neglected that which had been bestowed upon him, did wrong, and the Priesthood was taken from him. Now he is like a little crooked tree that has been denied sun and water and air—and you boys would know him also if I mentioned his name. These two boys started life very much alike; as boys they were equal; now, if you should put them side by side, you would see a big difference.”

The boys listened attentively. The Bishop seemed to have closed his little sermon; but he began again as if he had thought of something else:

“By the way, there is another matter I wish to

speak of. The other day I found two of you boys—I'll not say which two—on the sunny side of a barn, smoking. Now, I know, of course, that what you were smoking was cedar bark rolled into the form of a cigarette. Cedar bark may not be as injurious as tobacco, but the danger of it is that it leads to tobacco, and when once tobacco gets a hold of a boy, it makes a slave of him for life, unless he quits. Now, this man of whom I told you who doesn't amount to much is a constant smoker, and he began the bad habit by smoking cedar bark as a boy, as I happen to know.—That's all, boys; you'll all think about what I've been telling, will you not?"

Some of the boys said, "Yes, sir."

"Well, now; the Lord's going to make Deacons of you; but He'll need your help to make fine men out of you. Just a moment, boys. Mary, come in and sing for the boys."

The Bishop's daughter came in and seated herself at the piano. "What do you boys like?" she asked.

In a few minutes she had the boys standing about her singing lustily if not so tunefully. In half an hour, they departed in fine spirits.

In due time the boys were ordained Deacons and definite duties were assigned them in the care of the meeting house. Will Jones wrote to his mother about it; in her reply, she said:

“.....I am so glad that you were counted worthy. Do your duty always, and you will have great joy in it. You have told me before of the fun you often have, and I am glad to know that you are enjoying yourself. Some boys wouldn't think it fun to clean and fill the lamps for the meeting-house; but it truly is. Prove it for yourself in this way: During the meeting, look at the clean lamp-chimney and the brightly burning lights and note what a cheerfulness they cast over the meeting. Then look into your own heart, and see if there isn't a sweet contentment there, a sort of reflection from the lamps you have polished. Try this, and then write to me the results.”

Shortly after this letter, another came from his mother, telling him that his father had died. Although this father had never been much to Will, the boy's heart was full at the news, and he cried softly on his pillow that night. His mother was now alone. She could come to him. Here was plenty to eat and

to wear, and here was sunshine and freedom; and then, the boy planned, *he* was getting a big boy and could work. He would earn money and send for his mother. The tears dried, and he fell to sleep with the happy thought.

The next morning at the breakfast table Will ventured:

“Aunt Martha, don’t you think I ought to quit school now and go to work to earn money to bring mother here?”

Aunt Martha looked at the boy for a moment before she replied: “What could you do?”

“Well, I don’t know. I—I can chop wood, an’ do chores, an’ when summer comes, I can work on a farm.”

“Well, when summer comes we can think about that, but you mustn’t quit school now. I’m sure your mother wouldn’t want you to do that.”

“No; I guess she wouldn’t, but—”

There seemed no other way at present than to continue school. Will talked the matter over with Ned a number of times; but his chum, though not usually lacking in suggestions, could not help him much in the way of earning one hundred dollars, the

amount it would take to pay for the mother's passage. The sum seemed vast and unattainable to the boys.

About a month before the closing of school, the Manager of the Co-op store went to the school teacher and told him he was looking for a boy to help in the store.

"I don't want a boy who is not going to school," the Manager explained, "for he's not the right kind to begin with. I want one who can be trusted, and who is apt, for there will be a chance for him to advance to a more responsible position." The teacher and the Manager considered the names of a number of the boys, but nothing was to be done until the close of school.

Spring came early that year, none too early, however, for the boys, eager to get out from poorly ventilated school-rooms to the invigorating out-doors. On the sunny side of the school house, when there wasn't time for marbles, the boys discussed their plans for the coming season of summer activity. Will Jones did not say much; responsibility weighed upon him; he would have to go to work to earn money just as soon as school was out. Ned Fisher's leadership had also waned, for his father had plans for him. These

two, at least, though they did not fully realize it, would, from that time on, be largely out of the boyhood life of Springtown. They would step out as leaders of the "crowd," changed anyway by the entering of younger boys, and others would take their place.

At the close of the school, Will Jones was given the job in the store. With awe the boys heard the news. None of their ambitions had ever reached the exalted height of working in a store, where, if they so desired, they could at any time go behind the counter and take a piece of candy. And here was Will Jones given this great honor!

Uncle Josiah and Aunt Martha and the Bishop and many others were glad. "Good for you, William Wallace!" exclaimed his aunt. "See to it that you make good."

And the boy said, "I'll try."

Will had been in his new position about a month, when one day Mr. Fisher came into the store and leaned over the counter where Will was weighing out some sugar.

"Say," said Mr. Fisher, "do you want to sell Prince?"

“What? Sell Prince? Not much. Who wants to buy him?”

“I do.”

“You? he’s no good to work. Why do you want him?”

“Oh, I just want him; he’s no good to you—just an expense.”

To sell the horse had never entered Will’s head. Prince was “one of them,”—one of the crowd. One might as well think of selling one’s best friend or a brother. Oh, no.

“Well, I don’t blame you; but look here.” Mr. Fisher showed Will a letter. “I just now got this from the postmaster. It’s from the circus man who says he’s trying to find the person who got his disabled pony last summer at the circus. He asks the postmaster if he knows of any such person in Springtown. The postmaster does, so here’s the letter.”

Will read the letter. It informed him that the young lady who had been riding Prince in the circus would give him no rest until he had found the horse for her. The circus would be in Wanda again early in June. He would be glad to meet the one who now had the pony, if the animal was still alive. . . . Will handed the letter back, and said:

"He can't have the horse. He's mine."

"Of course, he'll pay you for it."

"I don't care. Prince don't want to go back to the circus. He wants to stay with me."

"How do you know?"

"Well—I know—Do you want some soap?"—this to the customer.

The postmaster answered the letter of inquiry, and in the course of two weeks, Will received a communication. In it the circus man said he was glad to know that the horse was well. The young lady was set on having it again, as she had never been able to perform her act successfully since she had lost him. Of course, the expense of caring for the horse would be met. The circus would be in Wanda on the 7th—ten days off—and he would come to Springtown the day before.

All the members of the family were present when Will read the letter.

"Are you going to let them have him?" asked Gwennie. The animal had become her special pet since he had lived in their barn.

"I—I don't know," acknowledged Will.

"Don't you let them take him," she protested.

“Hush, Gwennie,” admonished the mother. “We’ll have to do what is best and right. We’ll wait and see what the circus man says.”

The man came as he had promised, the day before the circus. He looked over the little horse, examined carefully its injured leg, and observed it run freely about the yard. Mr. Fisher, Aunt Martha, Ned, Will, and a group of other interested boys were there.

“He seems to be all right again,” said the man. “Now, what do we owe you for taking care of him?” He spoke as if he was still owner of the horse, and that it was only a matter of paying for the hay he had eaten and then taking him away.

“The horse is mine,” said Will, “and I don’t want to sell him.”

The man looked at the boy. “Yes,” continued Will, “you gave him to me—and Ned, and Ned gave me his share—an’ he’s mine—an’ I want him!”

The boy’s voice trembled. This was the first animal of any kind that he had owned. He had learned to love the knowing little pony, and the pony had surely returned that love as much as any animal can. Even as they stood there looking at it, the horse came

up and placed his head over Will's shoulder as if he was choosing rather to stay with the boys in the green fields of Springtown than to be hurried about the country to cut up capers in a dusty, noisy circus ring. Will placed his arm about the horse's neck and petted it gently.

"Well," said the circus man, "we'll say it's your horse. I'll buy him from you. I'll give you seventy-five dollars for him."

"That's fair," remarked Mr. Fisher, who thought the price was all such a plaything was worth.

Will stood mutely holding the horse's head, while no one spoke.

"We'll make it an even hundred dollars," offered the circus man.

Aunt Martha beckoned to the boy, who came to her, with a mute question on his face.

"A hundred dollars will bring your mother from the old country to you," she whispered to him.

A hundred dollars! What a large sum of money! Yes, that would bring his mother to him. Will's mind was not exactly clear. He went over to the fence, rested his arms on the rail, and looked across the valley to the hills. In a few moments he came back.

"I'll take the hundred dollars," he said.

The circus man took out his pocket book, and from it counted five twenty dollar bills, and handed them to Will. Then he wrote out a bill of sale, which he had Will sign.

"Well, now, that's business," remarked the buyer. "Will you bring the horse to Wanda?"

Will shook his head, whereupon Ned offered to accompany the circus man with the horse. Will gave the horse a farewell pat, then with the roll of bills firmly gripped, he walked into the house.

The circus man smiled sympathetically, gave each one in the group a pass to the circus—two to Aunt Martha—and then with Ned Fisher's help started on his way to Wanda.

But Will Jones did not go to the circus next day, though he had a ticket and a chance to ride. He said he could not very well leave his work at the store. When the Manager heard of that, he took a half day off himself, leaving Will in charge of the business.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

In Which Will Jones' Mother Comes to Zion, and We Say Goodby to the Boys of Springtown.

As usual, nearly the whole of Springtown had gone to the circus. The village was quiet and there was very little business at the store. About the middle of the afternoon, the Bishop stepped in to where Will was keeping lonely watch.

"Nothing much doing today," remarked the Bishop.

"No; everybody's gone to the circus."

"All but you—and me," said the Bishop with a smile.

"That's about right."

"Well, I heard what you did with your horse yesterday."

"Yes."

"I'm sure you did the right thing."

"I guess I did."

"For now you can soon have your mother with you."

"Yes," was all Will could say.

"I have just come from old Brother Hansen. He's pretty sick."

"I'm sorry; he wasn't well the last time I was there."

"I don't think he'll last long. He said he would like to see you. Could you go to him this evening?"

"Yes; just as soon as I close the store, I'll go up."

"That's good. Perhaps I'll call a little later in the evening."

As soon as Will could close the store that evening, he hurried up the hill to old Brother Hansen's. He found the old man in bed, hardly able to speak; but the sick man smiled faintly when he saw the lad com-

ing to his bedside. Will took his hand, and the sick man grasped it quite firmly, as he motioned for the boy to sit down near him.

"I'm—so—sick," he whispered.

"I'm sorry; can I do anything for you?"

The old man shook his head; then he looked at Will quite a while without speaking. Then faintly:

"I—soon—go. I have—no—people here. You—good—boy."

Will was confused into silence.

"Your moder—soon—come. You—live—here."

The old man raised an emaciated hand as if to indicate the room. Will did not understand, nor did he question him further, but he tried to cheer him by telling him what was going on in the neighborhood. The sick man listened, then after a time, he interrupted:

"Dare, dat—vil—do. Bring—me—box." He pointed to the drawer in his desk which contained his photographs. Will brought them to the old man and helped him untie the package and place the pictures in his hands. He looked at them one by one. The last one was that of Marie, and he held it in his trembling hand a long time. When he laid it down on the coverlet, he murmured:

“Marie—I—come—soon.”

Then he apparently fell asleep. Will watched for some time until the Bishop came, then some Relief Society sisters. As Will could do no more, he went home.

The next morning the Bishop called at the Jones' home before Will had gone to the store and told them that old Brother Hansen had died during the night.

“And I have something to tell Will, here, which you, Sister Jones, may hear. Some people who talk unknowingly have said that the old man was a miser, and that he had money hidden away somewhere in his house. Brother Hansen told me that that was not true. All the property he had was the two-roomed house in which he lived and the lot which he cultivated so well. He has no known relatives. Now, this is what he told me day before yesterday, that when he was dead, the lot and the house and everything in them should go to William Wallace Jones and his mother.”

The announcement was received in silence.

“That's right,” continued the Bishop. “I congratulate you, my boy. You deserve it too, for your kindness to the old man. He looked upon you as one of the best friends he had ever had.”

Will's heart was full. He could hardly eat his breakfast. How the Lord was blessing him, and he so unworthy! He had tried to be a good, fair, honest boy; but he hadn't done much, and now—

Ned met Will at the gate. He also had heard the news about Will's good luck. They walked on together to the store. Ned was talkative about his own affairs and prospects. He and his father were going to take up some land on the west bench and try dry-farming which was then beginning to be developed. Ned was to have a share in the profits, if there were any—and of course, there would be. Yes; prospects were indeed bright for him also.

The one hundred dollars, with a few more added, were immediately sent to the Liverpool church office for the emigrating of Will's mother. Shortly after old Brother Hansen's mortal remains had been laid away on the hill-side, Aunt Martha, Will, and Ned inspected the property which had come into Will's keeping. The lot had been somewhat neglected that spring, although the flowers and the shrubbery were growing in rich profusion and confusion. Will could see that much work would be needed to bring it back to its former well-kept condition. Aunt

Martha's practical eyes scanned the house, within and without, as to changes and possibilities.

The sun was just setting when the three stood on the small west porch and looked out on the beautiful prospect before them.

"Your mother will like this," said Aunt Martha. "She was always wanting flowers and grass and a bit of a garden, which she could never have in her crowded Liverpool quarters, though she did manage, you remember, a pot or two of flowers."

"How she'll like the fresh, clean air!" exclaimed Will as he himself expanded his lungs with a deep breath.

"Yes; and the freedom of country life, with plenty of butter—real butter, mind you—and eggs and milk. . . . I'm so glad and thankful for her sake, and for yours, too, Will."

She placed her hand caressingly on the boy's shoulder, and the boy surprised her by giving her a hug and a kiss.

"Aye, you are an English lad yet," she said in her English way.

"But I'm also an American," he replied, straightening to the dignity of his new citizenship.

Six weeks later the mother was due to arrive at Wanda. Uncle Josiah, Aunt Martha, Gwennie, and Will drove to the station to meet her. The train from the East was late as usual; but at last, the big Overland Limited arrived, slowed down, and stopped long enough to let off a little English-clad woman and her big trunk. Will stood back, somewhat timidly. Was this his mother? She had changed; yes, but there was the familiar smile, peculiar in that it seemed to come rather from her eyes than from her lips. She looked at her boy as he stood there, a little apart. How he had grown! How handsome he looked!

“William Wallace,” she said, “my boy, is that you?”

“Yes, Mother!”

Then they were in each other’s arms.

What a lot they all had to tell each other as they drove homeward! They let the horses take their own slow gait, so the sun had nearly set when they arrived at Springtown. They drove directly to the new home on the hill-side.

Not a word had been told Will’s mother about the home which was awaiting her, clean and spick

and span within and without, with even a great bank of English ivy climbing over the walls and about the back porch.

The new arrival looked at the house approvingly.

“What a neat little home you have,” she said to Aunt Martha.

“Do you like it?”

“Oh, yes, indeed; it looks so cool and cosy.”

Aunt Martha gave Will a knowing wink. They all went into the house, and the weary traveler sank into a chair, not too tired, however, to look on the simple comfort about her. Aunt Martha took her hat and cloak and hung them in a built-in closet behind the door. Mrs. Jones noticed that the closet was empty, also that there was no clothing hanging about, such as may always be found in a small occupied house. She wondered what it could mean.

“Isn’t this your home?” she asked Aunt Martha.

Aunt Martha laughed gently and again looked at Will.

“What is it—what are you two up to?”

“William Wallace, tell her.”

“This is *our* house, Mother, *our* home.”

“Ours?”

Mrs. Jones arose and looked about in curious amazement; but she was cut short in her questioning and her exclamations by a chorus of voices from without. The boys of Springtown—Will’s crowd—had come in a body, and they were trying to sing a song of welcome by the open window. Even Sport, the dog, was with them, and added his howls to their voices. Will went to the door.

“Halloo, boys; come in,” he invited. But the boys hung back.

“Who are they?” asked his mother.

“They’re the boys,” explained Will, “my crowd.”

Mrs. Jones added her invitation to Will’s.

“Thank ye, m’am,” said Dick; “but we jest come to welcome ye, ’cause you’re Will’s mother.”

Just then the Manager of the Co-op store drove up and handed over to Uncle Josiah a freezer of ice-cream. He followed the ice-cream into the house, remained a few minutes, then came out and drove off. The boys lingered.

Yes; each of them got a dish of ice-cream and a cookie before they went clattering and chattering down the path.

After the others had gone, Will lighted the lamp, the self-same lamp of curious workmanship which had given light for many years to its former owner. He placed it on the table in his mother's room.

"Mother," said Will, "this is your room. Go to bed now and rest as long as you can in the morning. I sleep out on the porch. There need be no hurry for either of us to get up, as I have tomorrow off."

Tears of joy stood in the woman's eyes. What a release from bondage had been hers! To what a real Land of Zion had she come, and how good the Lord had been! She took her boy's hands and looked into his face for a long time.

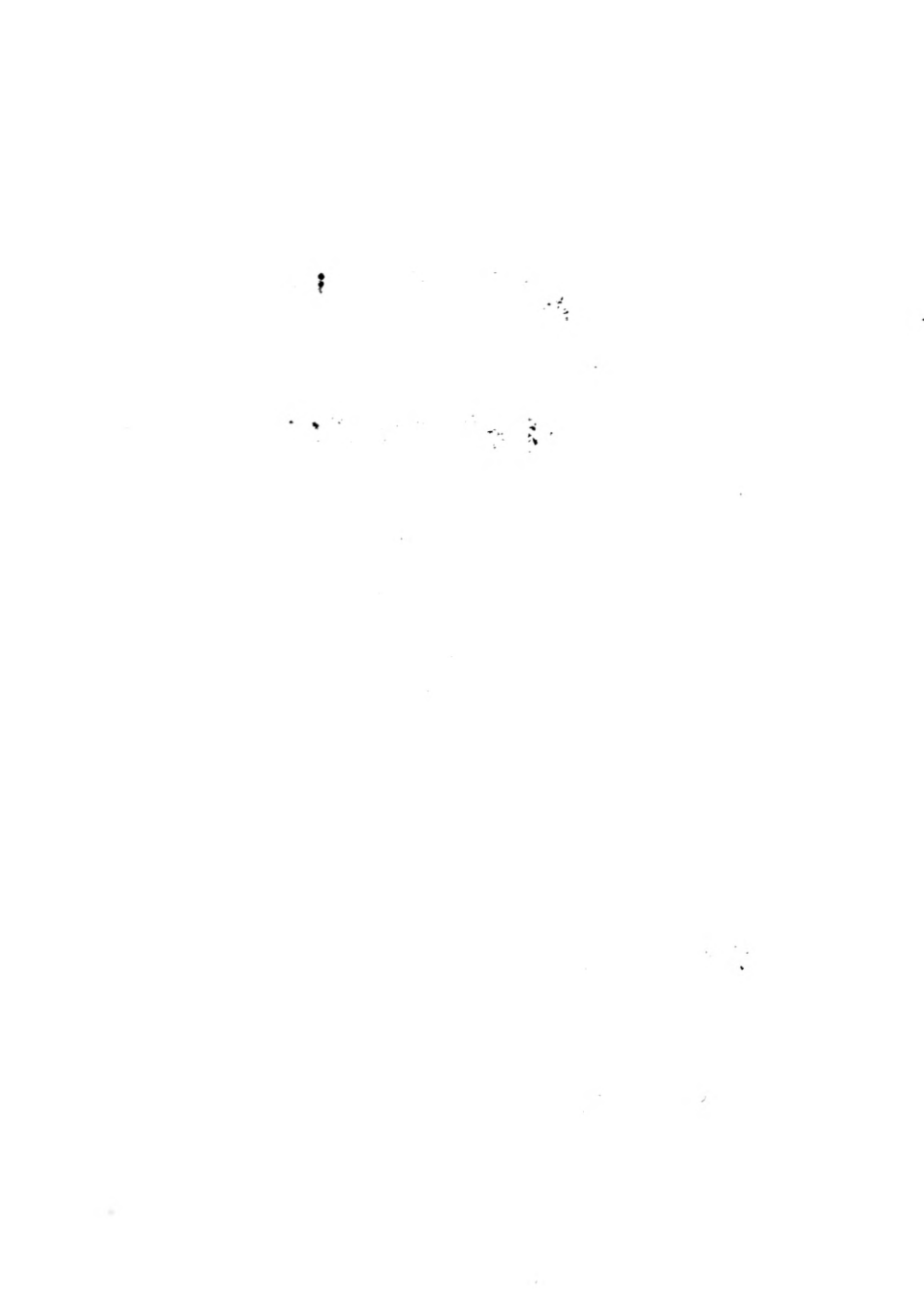
"William Wallace," she asked softly, "do you always say your prayers?"

"Yes, mother—nearly always."

"Tonight we'll say them together. We'll thank the Lord for His great mercy and goodness toward us. Come, my boy, kneel here with me."

The silence of a country evening brooded over valley, village, and the little home on the hillside. From a nearby yard the silvery tinkle of a sheep's bell and the soft cooing of pigeons mingled their music with the mother's fervent prayer.





DATE DUE

OCT 29 1979			
JAN 1 1980	MAR 22 1990		
	MAR 18 1980		
	OCT 12 1992		
	JAN 31 1997		
	OCT 07 2004		
	OCT 01 2004		
	FEB 03 2009		
	NOV 30 1987		
MAY 21 1985			
JAN 1 1980			
AUG 5 1986			
SEP 1 1987			

